



DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON

PHASE TWO: REOPENING OF CHURCHES FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP

DIOCESAN DIRECTIVES

With the announcement from Governor Justice of a phased reopening that allows for a return to public worship, the following directives are provided. They are based on current guidance issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other public health authorities. These guidelines also integrate the requirements of the Catholic Church for the valid and licit celebration of Mass, in accord with Catholic teaching, liturgical law, and canon law. They are formulated with great care to preserve and respect the reverence due to the Holy Eucharist and the powerful liturgical and sacramental symbolism of the rites we celebrate. The guidelines developed by the Thomistic Institute at the Pontifical Faculty of the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D.C. were also utilized in the development of these directives. Phase I required the suspension of Masses with a congregation and the closure of our churches. Phase II is a transitional phase allowing for the resumption of public Masses, celebrated with prudent restrictions, as we move toward Phase III, the normal celebration of our Catholic liturgies.

A parish's or mission's inability and/or failure to comply with these directives can result in the closure of a church building and/or denial of the permission to celebrate liturgies. For example, the inability and/or failure to sanitize a church before and/or after use will result in closure of the facility.

GENERAL DIRECTIVES

- 1. Once a parish or mission has submitted a plan to the Diocese that is consistent with all the directives contained herein (and observing any local governmental determinations) and the parish plan is approved by the Bishop, Masses may resume with reduced capacity at the earliest on Sunday, May 24 (including Saturday, May 23, anticipatory Mass).** Parish plans should be sent to the attention of the Chancellor, Mr. Chad Carter. For your convenience, a planning form to be filled out by the pastor, is included with these directives.
2. The faithful of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston are still dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass until further notice. Anyone who is sick should stay home, as should anyone who fears contracting a disease by attending Mass. Parishes should communicate clearly to parishioners who are vulnerable, that they should remain at home in accordance with the recommendations of the World Health Organization and the U.S. Center for Disease Control. Those who are vulnerable include those who are over the age of sixty-five (65), have existing heart or lung conditions, have diabetes, or are otherwise immuno-compromised. Such individuals should not volunteer or be asked to volunteer to fulfill liturgical ministries during this crisis.
3. Priests themselves must be aware of their own vulnerabilities. They must be aware of the possibility of becoming infected themselves or infecting others. They are obliged to exercise caution and prudence. Age and health may impose further restrictions and modifications. A priest with a respiratory infection of any kind should avoid celebrating public Masses or administering sacraments during this phase.

4. Pews and other commonly touched surfaces in the church (including doorknobs and handrails, restrooms) are to be regularly and thoroughly cleaned, particularly after recent usage. This includes sanctuary and sacristy. (See CDC recommendations on cleaning and disinfecting your facility. If an EPA-approved disinfectant is unavailable, you can use 1/3 cup bleach added to 1 gallon of water, or 70% alcohol solutions to disinfect. Do not mix bleach or other cleaning and disinfection products together.)
5. Place hand sanitizers near the entrances to a church. Encourage those entering and exiting to perform hand sanitizing hygiene.
6. Parishes are to ensure that social distancing (six feet of separation) is observed for all present inside the church, including ministers and members of the assembly.
7. In accord with current public health recommendations, the faithful should wear cloth face coverings over noses and mouths when in public, including when they come to church. Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone unable to remove the mask without assistance.

PARTICULAR DIRECTIVES FOR MASS

8. There are to be no social gatherings before or after Mass. This includes congregating in the vestibule of the church, on the steps of the church or in the church parking lot.
9. Vestibules and pews are to be cleared of all handouts, reading materials, hymnals, missalettes, and other permanent/semi-permanent worship aides; if your parish uses a Book of Intercessions that should also be removed at this time. If worship aides are needed, disposable aides can be used and are to be set on a table for individuals to pick up as they enter the church; worship aides are NOT to be distributed by an usher or greeter. Such aides are not reused from one Mass to the next and must be disposed of after each Mass. Appropriate licensing must be secured if producing a worship aide. In addition, if weekly bulletins are produced, they too should be placed on tables for individuals to pick up as they wish.
10. All Holy Water fonts and the baptismal font are to remain empty until further notice.
11. If multiple public Masses are scheduled on the same day, enough time is to be scheduled between each Mass to allow for a thorough disinfection of surfaces, for air within the building to be refreshed through ventilation/circulation, and for worship aides to be disposed of and replaced.
12. All ministers and all members of the assembly are to disinfect their hands upon entering the church. Ushers or hospitality ministers are to help facilitate this.
13. Strict social distancing is to be maintained. The faithful are to maintain a 6-foot distance from each other at all times. The first row (closest to the sanctuary) is to remain empty. Starting with the second pew, seating for the assembly begins. People are seated in every other pew – 6-feet apart from each other. Seating is so arranged that no one is directly behind the person or in front of them. (See the enclosed chart.) Pews 3,5,7, ..., are sealed off from entrance by tape, cord, etc. Ushers or hospitality ministers are to help facilitate this.
14. Members of a single household do not need to practice physical distancing with each other and so may sit together in the same row.

15. Seating will need to be limited depending upon the size of the church and its setup. The pastor or his designee must carefully determine and plan out the limited seating capacity consistent with social distancing norms. It is anticipated that limited seating capacity for your church will be approximately 20%-25% of total seating capacity. It is also recommended that ushers actually seat people as they enter the church. Once seating capacity has been reached, there needs to be developed a pastoral and sensitive way of indicating to parishioners – “Sorry, we have reached capacity and by health guidelines are not permitted to allow anyone else into the church.” Utilizing overflow seating in a parish hall, gymnasium or other space is acceptable if you are able to project the video and audio of the Mass as it is being celebrated in the church (those in overflow seating must still wear masks and practice social distancing). At the time of Communion, an usher may come to the overflow seating area and lead all from that space to the church where they will receive Communion in the same manner as those seated in the church.

16. **In Phase Two, the only ministers are the presider, a deacon (if present), con-celebrants (if present), one musician and a cantor (NO choirs) and ushers/hospitality ministers. There are no servers - youth or adult. One lector per Mass may be used if desired (see further guidelines in this document). An Extraordinary Minister of Communion (if a deacon is not present) may only be utilized when the presider is unable to distribute Communion himself.** Ministers are to maintain a 6-foot distance from one another and the assembly. Greater care needs to be given to the selection of music so that it serves the liturgy, but is conscious of time. The Communion Rite may take longer than usual because of the manner of distribution. During Phase Two, simplicity should be preferred.

17. The faithful are to wear masks throughout the Mass except, at the moment, they consume the host. The ministers (the priest, deacon if present, and the lector) do not wear masks while in the sanctuary unless they are unable to maintain a six-foot distance from each other and the assembly. The presider must wear a mask during the distribution of Communion. In the event the presider is unable to distribute Communion, then a deacon or an Extraordinary Minister may do so while also wearing a mask.

18. Before Mass, the Missal can be placed on the altar. As well, all items for the Lavabo can be placed on the right side of the altar facing the assembly or on the credence table if it is near the altar.

19. The Entrance Procession proceeds from the Sacristy directly to the altar and should be conscious of social distancing.

20. The Sign of the Cross, Greeting and Penitential Rite can take place at the altar. A shorter option for the Penitential Act or sung setting of the Kyrie may be appropriate. When the Gloria is appropriate, it may be recited or a shorter sung setting is used. The Opening Prayer can be prayed from the altar.

21. All the readings may be proclaimed by the Presider. However if desired, one lector may be used with the following considerations: the lector will proclaim the First and Second Readings from the Ambo while the presider will proclaim the Gospel and give his homily from the location of the presider’s chair. Additionally if you have multiple Masses, photocopies of the lectionary readings and the Universal Prayer would have to be used for each lector as it is not practical to sanitize the individual pages of the lectionary. The cantor leads the Responsorial Psalm but from a separate microphone and music stand, NOT at the ambo.

22. Prayer of the Faithful/Universal Prayer should include petitions for those infected by the Coronavirus and those who cannot be present at Mass. They are read by the presider or the lector.

23. There is no collection taken up. A large basket should be placed in the main aisle next to the entrance of the first pew on the right, and another basket next to the entrance of the first pew on the left. As people process to Holy Communion, they can deposit their envelopes or cash in the baskets.

24. The presentation of gifts by members of the assembly is omitted.

25. The presider disinfects his hands before preparing the altar and gifts.

26. The ciboria for the congregation should be placed on a corporal away from the celebrant's paten and covered with lids or palls. Separate chalices for con-celebrating priests and deacons should be covered with palls until the reception of Communion. Social distancing is to be kept at the altar.

27. The lavabo for the presider takes place at the usual time with fresh water and a clean towel.

28. The holding of hands during the Lord's Prayer is strictly forbidden at this time.

29. The invitation "Let us offer each other the sign of peace" and the exchange of peace that follows are omitted.

30. Each con-celebrating priest and deacon is to consume the Precious Blood from separate chalices. Each priest and deacon is to purify the chalice he uses. Immediately after consuming the sacramental elements, priests and deacons are to disinfect their hands, even if they do not distribute Communion.

31. Distribution of Communion to the assembly:

a. The distribution of the Precious Blood to the laity is suppressed until further notice.

b. The minister of Communion wears a mask.

c. Holy Communion may not be distributed with gloves, nor may it be received with gloves. Tongs should not be used for the distribution of Holy Communion.

d. Prior to the distribution of Holy Communion, the following statement should be read:

Please listen carefully to these instructions for receiving Holy Communion. As always, Catholics in the state of grace are welcome to receive the Sacrament although no one is obliged to receive it. Those not receiving sacramentally are urged to make a spiritual communion, inviting the Lord into their hearts.

When approaching for Communion, form a single line in the middle of the center aisle and remain six feet apart from others, observing the markings on the floor. After the priest says, "The Body of Christ" and you say, "Amen," approach the priest, stopping an arm's length from him. Although you may receive either in the hand or on the tongue, the weight of medical opinion is that it is safer to receive in the hand.

If you receive in the hand, extend your arms and open your hand up fully, keep your mask on until you step away from the priest, then lower the mask to consume the Host. If you receive on the tongue, lower your mask, extend your tongue fully and then move to the side. The priest must sanitize his hands after each person who receives on the tongue; otherwise, the priest only needs to sanitize his hands if he inadvertently touches someone's hand when Communion is received in that manner. Then return to your pew by the side aisle.

Since there is no offertory collection, kindly bring your offering with you as you come up the aisle and drop it in the basket before approaching the priest for Holy Communion. Thank you for your attention to these matters.

- e. There will be only one station for distributing Holy Communion under the form of Bread to the congregation. It will be in the center aisle at the foot of the sanctuary. There should be a small table to the side of the priest. On this table is to be placed a corporal, a purificator(s) and a hand disinfecting product. An ablution cup could also be on this table to purify one's fingers before using the sanitizer. When a priest sanitizes his hands, he first places the ciborium on the corporal and then disinfects.
- f. To assist safe social distancing, tape should mark where people stand or stop during the reception of Communion. There should be tape markers beginning with where the priest stands for the distribution of Communion hosts. Then going back there should be tape markers every six feet so that communicants can maintain appropriate distancing as they process to receive Communion. There should also be a tape marker about arm's length from where the priest stands – that will be the marker to stop and actually receive Communion from the priest.
- g. Hospitality ministers (ushers) can assist with assuring proper practice.

32. Mass continues as usual. The Recessional is from the altar directly to the sacristy. Ushers (hospitality ministers) should dismiss people row by row starting from the pews that are closest to the exit.

Parishes with livestreaming capabilities are encouraged to continue livestreaming practices during Phase Two, insofar as possible, in order to continue ministry to those who are sick and homebound, including those who are vulnerable and those whose concerns for personal safety keep them at home.

PUBLIC CELEBRATIONS OF THE SACRAMENTS IN PHASE TWO

33. Public celebrations of the Sacraments are again permitted as long as adequate spacing and social distancing are managed and maintained. If the Sacraments are celebrated within a Mass, the directives above pertaining to the Celebration of Mass are to be adhered to. When the celebration of a particular sacrament requires contact of less than six-feet, all taking part in that Sacrament including the presider, must wear a mask.

The Celebration of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults – The Bishop has dispensed with two of the three Scrutinies. The appropriate text will be supplied by the Office of Worship and Sacraments for the one Scrutiny which is ideally celebrated within the context of Sunday Mass on May 24, but can be also done on a weekday prior to Pentecost. The Celebration of the Initiation Sacraments for the Elect and Reception into Full Communion (for those already baptized) will also take place on May 31 (Pentecost Sunday).

34. **Baptisms** -- New water is to be used and blessed for each baptism. Baptisms are celebrated in accord with the limitations listed above.

35. **Confirmations** -- The Confirmation schedule is being studied and will be adjusted in light of the Bishop's schedule. If celebrated in Phase Two, they are celebrated in accord with the limitations listed above.

36. **Weddings** can now be celebrated but they are to be celebrated in accord with the limitations listed above. Further, in Phase Two, bridal parties are reminded to maintain appropriate social distancing.

37. **Funerals** may be celebrated in accord with the limitations listed above. There are to be no parish sponsored funeral lunches.

38. **Anointing of the Sick** -- Priests are asked to be courageous and generously respond to those who are in proximate danger of death and request anointing and viaticum. Prudence should be exercised in the performance of this Sacrament. The priest should wear a face mask. In order for anointing to be valid, the priest must be physically present to the person. The priest should remain at least six feet from the recipient for the entirety of the Rite of Anointing, except for the actual moment of anointing. The laying on of hands should be omitted. When the moment comes for anointing, the priest should use a cotton swab for the actual anointing of the forehead omitting the anointing of the hands. He should drop the cotton swab into a paper sack, without touching the sack with his hands. He should immediately perform hand hygiene, using a hand sanitizer. Close the paper bag securely. Later the priest can burn the paper bag with the cotton swab inside. He should not re-open or re-use the paper bag.

39. **Confessions** – can be celebrated with the same conditions provided for Phase One that were guided by the same limitations listed above. In particular, the priest and the penitent must be six feet apart and both wearing masks. Care for privacy and confidentiality must be preserved. If there is a line of penitents waiting for confessions, they must preserve a six-foot distance between one another. Any commonly touched surfaces such as a chair or prie dieu should be wiped down/sanitized between each confession.

40. **Churches may be kept open** for private prayer in accord with the limitations listed above. However, a designated person must always be present to see where the visitor sits and what they touch and then to sanitize and clean those surfaces once the visitor leaves. There should be limited, set hours (NOT 24 hours a day) that a church is opened. The church should be sanitized after closing or before opening the next day.

41. **Eucharistic Exposition** is permitted for a designated time period (NOT for 24 hours a day) in accord with the limitations listed above. **Benediction** is permitted in accord with the limitations listed above. Whenever there is Eucharistic Adoration, someone must always be present. The church should be sanitized and cleaned before closing the church or before it opens the next day.