

Phase Two Guidelines

The Resumption of Public Worship with the Faithful within Church buildings

This document outlines the Phase Two Procedures designed to allow the resumption of indoor Masses within the Diocese of Bridgeport in a safe and reverent manner. These procedures apply equally to the celebration of all Sunday Masses, Weekday Masses, Funeral Masses, Nuptial Weddings, and Baptisms.

Indoor Masses may resume beginning the weekend of the **Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ** (June 13th and 14th). Weekday Masses, Funeral Masses and Nuptial Masses may also resume inside of a parish church on the same weekend. All parishes must make every effort to begin offering indoor Masses by the **13th Sunday in Ordinary Time** (June 27th and 28th). If a pastor feels this is not feasible, then he should discuss his particular situation with the Vicar General.

Before any parish is permitted to begin the celebration of indoor Masses, each pastor must submit reopening plans to their respective Dean. The Deans are responsible for reviewing and approving the plans. Upon receipt of a parish plan, the Dean is required to forward a copy to the Vicar General for his review as well. Every Pastor must have their plan approved by their respective Dean at least 5 days prior to the start of their first indoor Mass.

It is permissible to continue to offer Masses outdoors given the limited seating capacity due to social distancing. Outdoor Mass capacity has been revised. No more than 150 people (including clergy, staff, volunteers, and attendees) may be present at an outdoor Mass. There is no outdoor capacity limit if attendees stay inside their cars for a Mass in the parish parking lot as long as there is 6 feet of distance between cars and each car can leave at any time.

Masses may be simulcast to other locations (either indoor or outdoor) on parish property provided that all of these guidelines for Mass within the church are adhered to in these auxiliary locations. The capacity limit for indoor Masses is the lesser of 25% fire code occupancy or 100 people (including clergy, staff, volunteers, and attendees). This capacity must also ensure 6 feet of social distance in all directions between individuals or household units. Therefore, with social distancing a church's capacity may be less than 100 people. This capacity limit applies to the total number of people indoors on parish property for a given Mass. As an example, if the church capacity with social distancing inside the main church is 60 people, then only 40 people may be seated in an indoor auxiliary location. If simulcasting to an outdoor seated area, this area should have no more than 50 people.

The *Interim Guidance for Communities of Faith* from the CDC will also be helpful in preparing for indoor Masses and can be found by clicking the following link:

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/faith-based.html?utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=88391390&hsenc=p2ANqtz--fohvEYK1oveVmVFX5Xg1DsHnW8UxwChmU_mm6V2Xjq8S_i7u6cPHQluJ2-sZhEMzIHikPoghk6WfFLqyqf2Hwh4nQw&_hsmi=88391390

1. Preparation Required Prior to the Start of the First Indoor Mass

a. Initial Preparation of the Church

- i. **Use of Printed Materials:**
 1. All hymnals and missalettes are to be removed from the pews and stored for the duration of the pandemic. No other materials may be left in pews.
 2. Printed worship aids should not be distributed.
 3. No material should be on display in the narthex or vestibule of the church. This includes all racks of materials, printed texts, etc.
 4. Sunday bulletins should be made available on the parish website and should not be printed at this time.
- ii. **Holy water fonts** are to remain empty until further notice.
- iii. **Pews** should be marked with physical distancing indicators.
 1. Removable tape, such as painter's tape, is encouraged. Such markers should indicate 6-foot sections within each usable pew.
 2. In some churches every other pew may be used if they are 6-feet apart, in other churches every third pew may be required. This should be carefully measured and then marked so that it is clear to all attending where it is permissible to sit.
- iv. **Signs** should be posted near all entry and exit areas clearly explaining that masks and social distancing are required. Also, a reminder should be posted that anyone who is not feeling well or has recently been exposed to someone who is COVID-19 positive should not enter the building. In addition, those at-risk should be discouraged from attending in-person.
- v. **Collection baskets** should be placed in a conspicuous location. It should be made clear to parishioners when donations should be made. Preferably, the collection basket should be available either as they enter or exit the church. Passing of collection baskets is not allowed. Online giving should continue to be encouraged.
 1. The basket should be monitored by a dedicated volunteer while it is available for use. Once everyone has been seated or after everyone has left the church, two volunteers walking 6 feet apart should bring the collection to the predetermined safe location.
 2. If the pastor decides to make the collection basket available both before and after Mass, then this process must be done just prior to the start of Mass and then again after everyone has left after Mass.
- vi. **A small table** should be placed where the Communion minister will distribute Holy Communion. The table should be large enough to accommodate a corporal, purificator, ciborium, and hand sanitizer.

1. Markings (such as painter's tape), should be placed 6 feet apart on the floor approaching this table, indicating physical distancing of communicants in the Communion line.
- vii. **A plan for dismissal** of the assembly should be created so that the 6-foot physical distancing is observed as the faithful leave the church.

b. Initial Sanitization of the Church

- i. The church including restrooms should be cleaned by professionals experienced with disinfecting spaces for the coronavirus prior to the celebration of the first Mass indoors.
 1. If a parish is not able to afford hiring a professional, then volunteers with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (gloves, face mask, and face shield) should clean all high touch areas in the church including restrooms with sanitizing wipes or spray. High touch areas include doorknobs, door handles, door bars, light switches, faucets, sinks, microphones, toilets, pews, the ambo, and the top of altar rails if they are to be used for the for Holy Communion.
 2. For addition guidelines, please refer to the CDC's instructions for cleaning and disinfecting your facility: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>
 3. Disinfectants approved by the EPA that kill the virus that causes COVID-19 must be used when cleaning the church. Click on the following link for a list of EPA approved disinfecting products: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>
- ii. **Restrooms may remain closed in this phase, but if available, then prepare the restroom area** in this, or a similar way:
 1. Only one person at a time may occupy the restroom.
 2. At the entrance of the restroom, if feasible, the floor should be marked in 6-foot intervals, beginning 6 feet from the door.
 3. Place sanitizing wipes and a small garbage basket in each stall.
 4. Post a sign on the door and in each restroom indicating the following:
 - a. Only one occupant in the restroom at a time.
 - b. When waiting, stand at least 6 feet apart (as indicated by floor markings if applicable).
 - c. Clean toilet seat with sanitizing wipes before and after each use. Please dispose of these wipes in the trash. Do not flush them.
 - d. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds prior to leaving restroom.
- iii. Hand sanitizer is to be made available at all entrances and exits throughout the church, in the narthex, in restrooms, near the ambo and

altar, and on the table(s) prepared for the distribution of Holy Communion.

c. Preparation of the Clergy, Parish Staff, Volunteers, and those Participating in the Mass

i. Pastors and Parochial Administrators are considered the program administrators who ensure the following:

1. Guidelines are implemented and followed.
2. Training programs are in place for staff and volunteers.
3. Provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for all clergy and staff who participate in the liturgy.
4. Ensure volunteers bring their own PPE as required based on their assigned responsibility. The parish may provide PPE if necessary.
5. Prior to each Mass either they or their delegate should ask clergy, staff, and volunteers to confirm that they have not experienced any COVID-19 CDC-defined symptoms.
6. Instruct members of the clergy, staff, and volunteers that they must stay home if they are sick or exhibit any COVID-19 CDC-defined symptoms.

ii. Participation of Liturgical Ministers:

1. For this phase of the reopening of our churches, the following lay ministers may participate in the celebration of the Mass (both indoors and outdoors): Readers, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Accompanist, and Cantor (must be 12 feet away from the congregation).
2. Readers and Extraordinary ministers must watch a short training video prior to serving. This video will soon be available on the diocesan Leadership Institute website.
3. The bishop is allowing those who have been installed in various liturgical roles to decline to serve during this phase and still remain in good standing.
4. Those who are over the age of 65 or have underlying health issues should not serve at this time.
5. Altar servers are not permitted to serve in this phase.

iii. Use of Face Masks:

1. Parish staff and volunteers must wear face masks at all times. They may remove their face masks only when receiving Holy Communion per the guidelines for Holy Communion.
 - a. Parish staff and volunteers must wear disposable gloves. If gloves are not available, then frequent sanitization of hands is required.

2. All members of the congregation need to wear masks, from the time they leave their cars in the parking lot until the time they return to their cars, with a few exceptions:
 - a. Children under the age of two should not wear masks.
 - b. Parents should judge for children between the ages of two and five whether they should wear a mask.
 - c. All people who claim an exemption for a legitimate health reason (one that does not pose a risk to others) can forego wearing a mask.
 - d. The faithful may remove their face masks only when receiving Holy Communion per the guidelines for Holy Communion.
3. The following are the guidelines for the use of face masks by priests.
 - a. If the priest is alone in the sanctuary, or if he is only accompanied by a deacon(s) and / or concelebrant(s) in the sanctuary with proper social distancing during the celebration of the Mass, then the use of a face mask is optional. He must, however, wear a face mask for the distribution of Holy Communion.
 - b. If the priest is not wearing a face mask during the celebration of the Mass, then he must maintain a distance of 12 feet from the congregation.
 - c. If lay liturgical ministers are present in the sanctuary during the celebration of the Mass, then the priest must wear a face mask. He may remove his face mask to proclaim the Gospel and preach.
4. Deacons have the option to wear face masks during the celebration of Mass provided only clergy are in the sanctuary. It is solely up to the deacon to decide based on his individual circumstances. If the deacon chooses not to wear a mask, then he must maintain proper social distancing to the fullest extent possible. If lay ministers are present, then he must wear a mask.
5. All lay liturgical ministers must wear face masks.
 - a. Readers may remove his or her face mask when proclaiming Scripture. The reader should wipe the microphone with a sanitized wipe after reading.

iv. Social Distancing and Church Capacity:

1. Strict social distancing of at least 6 feet must be maintained at all times with anyone outside of a person's immediate household. Social distancing must be maintained from the time a person or family leave their car until the time they return.
2. It is acceptable for people walking up to receive Holy Communion to pass by people seated in pews with less than 6

feet of space since this action is brief and does not qualify as prolonged exposure to those involved.

3. State capacity restrictions must be followed as previously defined.
- v. At least one staff member or volunteer must be present while the church is in use to enforce compliance with these instructions and hygiene protocols.

2. Liturgical Guidelines for the Celebration of Indoor Mass

a. General Guidelines

- i. Entrance and exit doors are to be propped or held open at the beginning and end of Mass to prevent people from touching door handles, knobs, or push plates.
- ii. If weather permits, church windows should be left open to improve air circulation. It is permissible to run air conditioning systems when the weather justifies its use.
- iii. Staff, ushers, or other volunteers should assist with directing people to marked pews.
- iv. Staff, ushers, or other volunteers should ensure that no one congregates in common space such as foyers, lobbies, community and multi-purpose rooms, or event spaces.
- v. It is recommended that only an accompanist fulfill music ministry during this phase. Based on scientific research and the opinion of the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS), the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA), Chorus America, the Performing Arts Medical Association (PAMA), and the Catholic Medical Association congregational singing by the assembly is suspended until further notice. Because singing expels significantly more aerosolized particles of virus than speaking, it creates a much greater risk of spreading the virus. In particular, choirs should not rehearse or sing until further notice.
- vi. Members of the clergy are exempt from social distancing when they perform one-on-one religious rituals provided that the member of the clergy and the person receiving the ritual are socially distant from everyone else. For example, a member of the clergy distributes Holy Communion provided that everyone else is at least 6 feet away.

b. Specific Liturgical Guidelines

- i. Processions through the center aisle are prohibited until further notice. The celebrant should enter and exit via the sacristy. If the sacristy is not located near the sanctuary, then the celebrant should enter from an area near the sanctuary and remain in the sanctuary until it is safe to return to the sacristy. People should not be greeted either before or after Mass.

- ii. It is recommended that the Responsorial Psalm and all parts of the Mass be recited.
 - 1. In this case, a cantor may sing at the Procession (as the celebrant processes from the sacristy or near the sanctuary), Preparation of the Gifts, Communion, Communion Meditation, and Recessional (as the celebrant returns to the sacristy or remains in the sanctuary).
 - 2. For pastoral reasons, the pastor may choose to have the Responsorial Psalm and parts of the Mass sung or chanted by the cantor or instrumentalist alone. In this case, the pastor or celebrant must instruct the congregation not to sing for their own safety. If the people refuse to comply, then the pastor is to suspend singing of the Responsorial Psalm and the Mass parts.
- iii. Consider hygienic options for the Liturgy of the Word, as an example:
 - 1. Use the same lector for the first two readings;
 - 2. The priest or deacon could proclaim all readings;
 - 3. Each reader could have a personal microphone, or the proclaimer of the first and second readings might have an entirely separate pulpit;
 - 4. Sanitizing wipes or hand sanitizer should be placed near the ambo.
- iv. Processions of gifts are suspended until further notice.
- v. During the Preparation of the Altar and of the Gifts, the ciborium(a) for the faithful should be placed on a corporal away from the celebrant's paten and covered with lids, or purificators if no lids are available. Chalice's for concelebrating priest(s) and for the deacon(s) should be covered with palls until the reception of Communion.
- vi. The faithful do not hold hands during the Lord's Prayer.
- vii. The physical sign of peace is omitted.
- viii. All concelebrating priests, as well as deacons assisting at the Mass, may receive Holy Communion at the usual time and in the usual manner. However, each must have a separate chalice from the main celebrant. The priest must purify his hands prior to giving Holy Communion to the deacon(s).
- ix. Distribution of Holy Communion from the chalice is prohibited to the faithful during this phase.

Distribution of Holy Communion Guidelines

- x. Please refer to the document regarding the protocols for the distribution of Holy Communion.
- xi. Priests and deacons may choose to have another competent minister distribute Holy Communion in their place. Priests and deacons over the age of 65 years old or with underlying health issues should strongly consider not distributing Holy Communion.

3. Procedures After Each Mass

- a. The church must be sanitized after each Mass. Please refer CDC guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting your facility by clicking on the following link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>
 - i. Parish Staff / Volunteers who are cleaning the church must wear gloves, face mask, and face shields (if available).
 - ii. High touch areas on Pews, in restrooms, and all other public areas must be sanitized with CDC approved cleaners.
 - iii. High touch areas on the ambo and microphones must be sanitized.
- b. A log must be kept that records the date, time, name of people cleaning, and areas cleaned for each cleaning.
- c. Chalice(s) and ciborium(a) must be cleaned with soap and water or UV light.
- d. If gloves were used for the distribution of Holy Communion, they must be deposited in a plastic bag. The gloves must be burned as soon as it is feasible.

4. In the event of positive COVID-19 case

- a. In the event that the parish is notified that someone who attended Mass has been diagnosed as COVID-19 positive, the following procedure should be followed.
 - i. To the extent possible, the people who attended that particular Mass should be notified that someone at their Mass has tested positive for COVID-19. It is critical to maintain confidentiality as required by the American with Disabilities ACT or other applicable laws in accordance with religious practices. The name of the person who is COVID-19 positive must not be disclosed. The diocese will provide a template for this communication.
 - ii. The pastor must contact the Vicar General to discuss the case and determine the most prudent course of action. Per state guidelines, testing and contact tracing protocols will be followed by any clergy, staff, or volunteers who have had prolonged exposure to the person who tested positive.
 - iii. If a member of the clergy, staff, or volunteers test positive, they must notify the pastor and follow state testing and contract tracing protocols. If the pastor tests positive, then he must notify the Vicar General.
 - iv. Notify the person who has tested positive for COVID-19 that they are not to return to church until they have met CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation which can be found by clicking at the following link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/when-its-safe.html>