

Guidelines for Advent and Christmas Liturgies in the Diocese of Burlington

1. Capacity Restriction

- Capacity in churches remain at whatever allows for physical distancing of 6 feet between members of different households, with a maximum capacity of 50% of the regular seating capacity of the church.
- Parishes are strongly urged to consider a reservation or ticketing system that utilizes both paper and online methods of signing up for Christmas Eve and/or Christmas Day in order to avoid turning people away at the door when capacity is reached.
- Where possible, overflow seating may be situated in the parish hall with the liturgy being live-streamed into that space. These spaces are also subject to the 50% or less capacity restriction as outlined above. Ordinary or Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should be scheduled to distribute communion in these spaces during the Mass so as to avoid extra people coming into the church.
- Under no circumstances should people be allowed to stand in the back of church or in the vestibule when the seating reaches capacity.

2. Mass Times

- For Christmas Eve 2020, Christmas Vigil Masses may begin as early as 2:00 pm.
- On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, allow adequate timing between Masses to sanitize all high-contact areas in the church and overflow areas (including pew edges) when the time between liturgies in the church is less than 24 hours. Sanitizing of the church and overflow areas are not optional.
- All priests in the Diocese of Burlington are given permission to trinate on both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. No more than 3 Masses are to be celebrated by any individual priest per day.
- Deaneries or parish clusters are asked to collaborate on the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Mass schedule to allow for the greatest number of options for those desiring to celebrate Mass. Christmas Mass times of neighboring parishes are to be widely published in parish bulletins and social media.
- As the obligation to attend Mass will still be suspended at Christmas, those who are hesitant to attend Mass on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day should be encouraged to attend Mass during the Christmas Season, especially during the Christmas Octave.
- The celebration of Mass during the Christmas Octave, with each day observed as a Solemnity, should be a priority this year. Consideration should be given to providing music in at least some of the liturgies during the Octave.

3. Covid-19 Protocols

- All of the current protocols found in the August 28, 2020 update of *Resuming Public Celebrations of Liturgy in the Diocese of Burlington* are to be reviewed and followed.

4. Required Signage for Churches

- Churches are required to have posted the signs specified in Part D of *Resuming Public Celebration of Liturgy in the Diocese of Burlington*. Please ensure that the signs are posted at all the entrances.

5. Music

- There is to be only one cantor/vocalist singing at a time in the liturgy. Multiple cantors may be scheduled for a liturgy, but only one person is singing at a time.
- Under no circumstances are choirs or ensembles of singers to be used, including on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.
- When overflow seating is designated, a cantor *may* be scheduled to sing in the space, providing a “live” voice to the music being live-streamed.
- Accompaniment may be on piano, keyboard, organ, or guitar. In addition to these instruments, other non-wind instruments may be used during the liturgy, provided that instrumentalists follow the Covid-19 protocols, including mask-wearing and physical distancing.
- Singing from members of the assembly should not be actively promoted but neither should it be forbidden. Putting numbers on hymn-boards, announcing hymns, inviting people to sing should not take place. It is recommended that musicians select a mix of music – some that will be familiar by memory to the assembly, and some that will not be as familiar.

6. Worship Aids

- Worship Aids may be printed for Christmas Eve and/or Christmas Day to provide an outline of the Mass to any visitors who may be unfamiliar with the liturgy.
- Music and readings *may* be printed in the worship aids, but **only after securing the necessary copyrights**. See onelicense.net for music copyrights. No copyright permission is needed to print the readings in a one-time use worship aid, but proper acknowledgements must be given. See <https://www.usccb.org/offices/new-american-bible/permissions>.
- Hymnals and missalettes are still not permitted to be put out in the pews/back of church. However, pastors may permit people to take home a missalette or hymnal and then bring it with them when they come to church.

7. Decorations

- Christmas decorations, including the Advent wreath and Christmas creche, may be utilized as usual.

- Those decorating, including vendors delivering trees or flowers, are asked to remain masked while working or in church.
- Consider spreading the decorating over a few days in order to allow for fewer people to be present together in the church at any one time.
- Advent wreaths and Christmas creches should be placed in an area to avoid the risk of violating physical distancing guidelines. As a reminder, the Advent wreath is blessed only at the first Mass on the First Sunday of Advent and is *not* repeated on subsequent Sundays (nos. 1509, 1512-1513 in the *Book of Blessings*). The practice of having an individual or family light the candle in a special ritual is to be avoided.

8. Christmas Pageants

- Christmas pageants of any kind are not allowed this year, even outside the liturgy.

9. The Sacrament of Penance

- As a reminder, Bishop Coyne has not permitted FORM III (General Confession & General Absolution) to be used at this time in the Diocese of Burlington.
- Communal Reconciliation Services (FORM II) may take place, with the appropriate precautions. For such services, multiple areas in the church and parish complex (including meeting rooms, classrooms, or outdoors) may be utilized for individual confession. It will be helpful to have ushers available to help guide penitents to available confession spots if those spots are spread out.
- For both Individual Confession (FORM I) and FORM II, the use of a small, enclosed confessional is permitted **ONLY** when the following criteria are met:
 - o Both the priest **AND** penitent **MUST** wear face masks
 - o Each penitent sanitizes his or her hands immediately **BEFORE** entering the confessional.
 - o All printed material such as prayer cards or prayer books must be taken out of the confessional.
 - o The confessional **MUST** be sanitized after **EVERY** period of confession.
- When a confessional cannot be used because the above protocols are unable to be implemented, an area in the church or parish complex should be set up to allow for both face-to-face confession and anonymous confession (with a screen) which allows for confidentiality to be maintained. The screen should have a cloth attached to it as an additional barrier between penitent and confessor. Physical distancing of 6 ft. between the priest and penitent **MUST** be maintained. Priest and penitent must wear masks.
- Confessions may also be heard outside on the church grounds. This means drive-thru confessions are also possible: penitents remain in their cars with the car window open while the priest hears their confession from a 6 foot distance from the window. Mobile phones are **NOT** to be used to facilitate priest/penitent communication.