



DIOCESE OF BUFFALO  
OFFICE OF WORSHIP

**Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest  
in the context of the *Road to Renewal***

As the *Road to Renewal* moves forward and the parishes of the Diocese of Buffalo form into Families of Parishes, each of us can recognize the potential for benefits and challenges along the way. This is natural in any time of transition or major reorganization.

One challenge that has already been identified by several parish families is the ability to ensure Masses are properly staffed by clergy. This is critical as new assignments take effect in the midst of temporary or developing Mass schedules, which will take time.

If a priest is scheduled for a *Sunday* Mass and for whatever reason does not fulfill the obligation (i.e. does not arrive in time to celebrate the Mass), the attached “Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest” may be used.

Bishop Fisher has set some parameters for the use of this rite to provide for the spiritual needs of the People of God while respecting the process of the *Road to Renewal* and the norms of the Church, namely:

- 1) **This rite is to be used in emergencies only.** It is not to be used to plan in advance for the absence of a priest (i.e. for a pastor’s day off or due to lack of available scheduled clergy. (Often referred to as “Communion Services” this rite is not meant as a replacement for scheduled Masses and should not be celebrated on a regular basis.)

2) **This rite is to be used on Sundays only.** Devotions such as praying the Rosary, Liturgy of the Hours, facilitating Bible study or other similar experiences of prayer can replace the devotion of daily Masses that cannot be celebrated.

3) **Parishioners must be kept informed of available Masses.** Every worship site should have available in the sacristy or church a current list of Masses being celebrated within the Family of Parishes (and others nearby) to afford parishioners the best chance of celebrating a Sunday Mass to fulfill their weekly obligation should a priest not be available. If possible, connecting parishioners to another Mass would be preferred over celebrating the attached rite.

4) **Selection and formation of ministers should be done in advance.** The proper celebrant of the rite for a Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest is a deacon or Eucharistic Minister properly formed and commissioned by mandate from the Bishop. (The rite attached is adapted for a lay minister.) Pastors should walk through the rite and its rubrics, providing proper contextualization for a particular worship site prior to its need.

5) **The tabernacle should contain sufficient supply.** A reasonable number of consecrated hosts should be available in the tabernacle in anticipation of weekend liturgies if the potential for an emergency exists.

Keep in mind that the ideal is that the tabernacle only reserve enough Eucharist for the sick, affording the faithful the opportunity to receive the Eucharist consecrated at the Mass they celebrate. It is assumed that the preparation for and use of this rite is a temporary measure, not the ideal, but strictly for exceptional circumstances.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Worship at [worship@buffalodiocese.org](mailto:worship@buffalodiocese.org) or (716) 847-5545.