

THE BISHOP OF ATLANTA

The Right Rev. Robert C. Wright



EPISCOPAL DIOCESE
OF ATLANTA

March 26, 2020

Beloved,

I hope this finds you encouraged by the Spirit. What follows is an attempt at providing additional clarity about worship and especially the Eucharist as we continue to worship online.

First, let me say that I expect the obvious, that the Eucharistic theology of the Book of Common Prayer remains central to all that we imagine. Second, that we bring sensitivity to the fact that the Diocese of Atlanta is a diocese consisting of 117 worshipping communities in 75 1/2 counties. And that under our big tent even prior to COVID-19, we held wildly diverse understandings of what it means to convene the faithful for the Lord's Supper.

Nevertheless, our present reality is unprecedented in the world and in the church. Therefore, it is incumbent on us who have been given the privilege of convening worship to hold fast to our tradition while simultaneously accounting for the exigencies of the times. This is no easy task and yet, according to the BCP pg. 9, it is the good and deep work of what it means to be an Anglican.

So let me share a menu of ways many of us are already responding. (This list is not exhaustive.)

1. Fasting from the Eucharist entirely until we are able to celebrate the mass again in person.
2. Substituting Morning Prayer and services of ante communion for Eucharistic liturgies.
3. Livestreaming Eucharistic liturgies/Pre-recording Eucharistic liturgies.

This option raises the question for some, what happens to elements/meals that viewing members present to their screens during the streamed Eucharist?

To this question, I want to make a distinction between consecration and blessing. At this time, I want to reserve the idea of consecration for what happens when a priest is

gathered with others in person. Still, a priest is called to bless, so let us add an additional prayer of blessing IF elements/meals are presented by viewers to screens. In my judgement, this approach protects the notion of consecration as the Church presently understands it, while attempting to be responsive to these peculiar circumstances.

(Statements like the one below might be added to liturgies with additional words of blessing should elements or meals be present during online worship.)

My Jesus, I believe that you are truly present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. I love you above all things, and long for you in my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. As though you have already come, I embrace you and unite myself entirely to you; never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.

(St. Alphonsus de Liguori, 1696-1787. Used at Washington National Cathedral March 15, 2020)

4. Worship consisting of only music, prayer, teaching/preaching that are more concise than our regular liturgies but are nevertheless based on the BCP or EOW.

Again, as I have said, this is not an exhaustive list but one, I hope, that reveals some of my thinking and that will generate some additional liturgical imagination for our clergy in their context. Please, when in doubt, [contact me directly](#) or contact [Canon John Thompson-Quartey](#).

Finally, let me say that as your bishop I trust you. I trust you to hold steady in the velocity and complexity of these days. I trust you to fend off the oppression of fear and commend the faith. I trust you to apply the riches of our faith and our tradition to the needs and opportunities of our present circumstances.

Be encouraged. God is a very present help.

Peace,
Rob+

