

MEMORANDUM



To: All Priests & Deacons of the Diocese of Rockville Centre
From: The Office of the Chancellor
**Re: Executive Summary of the Instructions
for Celebrating Holy Week in 2021**
Date: March 3, 2021

The memorandum accompanying this “Executive Summary”, entitled “Instructions for Celebrating Holy Week 2021” should be read in full by all priests and deacons of the Diocese. This year Rome has given pastors more options in how to celebrate Holy Week. The instructions from last year may be used if a pastor believes they are pastorally necessary, or the liturgies of Holy Week may be celebrated in the traditional way, with some modifications due to the ongoing pandemic. This document is merely meant to give an overview of the most relevant points but is not a substitute for reading the full memo.

I. General Instructions

The dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation remains in effect for all Catholics in the Diocese of Rockville Centre until further notice.

Parishes should continue to offer live-streamed liturgies if possible.

The current guidelines for the celebration of Mass still apply, including social distancing, reasonable sanitization measures of surfaces and hands, wearing masks and 50% capacity limit. The sign of peace continues to be omitted, and Communion may be distributed to the faithful under one species only.

It is still wise to keep the number of ministers in the sanctuary to a minimum, and to continue to observe social distancing, and hand sanitizing. This year again, it may be advisable for clergy (priests and deacons of the parish) to take the parts normally assigned to altar servers or others.

This year, due to the emergency created by the pandemic and the 50% rule, extra liturgies are permitted during the Triduum, if the pastor believes they are in the best interest of the faithful and will aid in social distancing. This means there may be more than one Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday, more than one Celebration of the Lord’s Passion on Good Friday, and even more than one Easter Vigil.

For the Proclamation of the Passion on Palm Sunday and Good Friday, the Gospel may be read straight-through by the Deacon, a concelebrant, or the Priest-celebrant himself. The Lectionary and Book of the Gospels present the Passion in this format. Otherwise, the Gospel may be read or sung by three persons who take the parts: Christ, Narrator, and Voice/Crowd.

II. The Great Week Pastoral Letter

Last year’s Pastoral Letter on Holy Week entitled, *The Great Week: A Pilgrimage with the Lord in Holy Week*, will be reissued (but not reprinted) and may be found at its own webpage: www.thegreatweek.com.

III. Day of Penance

The Diocesan Day of Penance will take place this year on Monday of Holy Week, March 29, 2021. Every parish in the Diocese is asked to provide the Sacrament of Reconciliation to the faithful continuously from 3:00 pm until 9:00 pm.

IV. Palm Sunday

Palms should be blessed and distributed in the parish churches on Palm Sunday, taking appropriate precautions. The First Form (The Procession) should not be used because of the problems of crowding and the inability to social distance. Instead, the Second Form (The Solemn Entrance), or the Third Form (The Simple Entrance) found in the *Roman Missal* should be used this year.

V. Chrism Mass

The Chrism Mass will be celebrated in the Cathedral of St. Agnes by Bishop Barres on Tuesday of Holy Week (March 30, 2020) at 4:00 pm. Priests are earnestly encouraged to attend the Mass, however, due to social distancing, the Chrism Mass will not be open to the public, nor will we be able to accommodate the Permanent Deacons this year. We will be sending out a separate invitation to all priests, and we ask for an email response for attendance. Holy Oils will be distributed as usual in the Msgr. Kelly Parish Center behind the Cathedral following the Mass.

VI. Holy Thursday Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper

As per the instruction from the CDW last year, a priest who does not concelebrate is permitted to celebrate Mass privately on Holy Thursday again this year.

The Washing of Feet (the *mandatum*), which is always optional, is to be omitted again this year. It is simply not possible to do the *mandatum* in a way that is safe because of COVID.

The transfer of the Most Blessed Sacrament may be done, or it may be omitted entirely at the end of Mass this year, according to the pastor's discretion. If it is to be done, there should be no procession of the faithful, but instead a limited number of clergy should process *within the Church*. The repository should be in the Church itself, in a place visible to all. If the transfer of the Blessed Sacrament is not to take place, Mass concludes as usual.

VII. Good Friday

The Solemn Intercessions follow the proclamation of the Passion and the Homily. An additional special intention "for the sick, the dead, for those who feel lost or dismayed" is requested again this year, which should be added **after** the 10th intention. It should take the following form:

Deacon/Assisting Minister: Let us pray, dearly beloved, for a swift end to the coronavirus pandemic that afflicts our world, that our God and Father will heal the sick, strengthen those who care for them, and help us all to persevere in faith. [Let us kneel.] (Prayer in silence). [Let us stand.] Priest: Almighty and merciful God, source of all life, health and healing, look with compassion on our world, brought low by disease; protect us in the midst of the grave challenges that assail us and in your fatherly providence grant recovery to the stricken, strength to those who care for them, and success to those working to eradicate this scourge. Through Christ our Lord.

For the Adoration of the Cross, the First Form should be used. This involves the unveiling of the Cross by the priest in three stages. Then priest celebrant *only* venerates the Cross by kissing; the other ministers venerate by genuflecting or bowing. The celebrant then holds the Cross aloft to be venerated by the faithful at their places in the pew. **Individual veneration of the Cross by the faithful by kissing is not permitted in the Diocese this year.**

VIII. The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night

The Easter Vigil Mass may be celebrated as it was last year, with the blessing of the fire omitted. In that case the Mass begins with the Sign of the Cross and the Greeting, followed immediately by the Preparation of the Candle, the *Exsultet*, and the Liturgy of the Word.

If the Vigil is to begin with the blessing of the fire, there should be only a limited number of liturgical ministers in the Procession with the Paschal Candle.

It is permitted for the Sacraments of Initiation to take place at the Easter Vigil or on Easter Sunday this year. For the celebration of Baptism and Confirmation, the Diocesan directives currently in force should be followed in administering these sacraments, using appropriate precautions including sanitizing and distancing. If the sprinkling with Holy Water at the conclusion of the Renewal of Baptismal Promises is done, the Priest need not move around the church, but may stand at the foot of the sanctuary and sprinkle from there.

A reminder to all pastors that the liturgical books for the RCIA make provision for celebrating the Sacraments of Initiation for adults in exceptional circumstances outside the Easter Vigil.

IX. Easter Sunday

Pastors may wish to provide overflow Masses in the event of large numbers exceeding 50% capacity.

X. Miscellaneous Lenten Notes

Holy Water fonts are to *remain* empty because of the COVID pandemic. However, Holy Water dispensers can remain available for people to take the Holy Water home with them.