

MEMORANDUM



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

Celebrating Holy Week 2021 in the Time of COVID-19

On March 19, 2020, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued a decree, signed by the Prefect Cardinal Sarah, entitled: “In the Time of COVID-19”. In this decree, the Holy See made special provisions for priests to celebrate the liturgies of Holy Week without the faithful being present. This document was subsequently updated by the Congregation on March 25, and again on March 26, 2020.

On February 17, 2021, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments released a “Note to Bishops and Episcopal Conferences on the Celebration of Holy Week 2021.” This document permits the special instructions for Holy Week given by the Congregation last year to be applied again this year. Bishop Barres grants to all pastors the permission to use the instructions for 2020 for the celebration of the Holy Week liturgies of 2021, if they so wish.

However, since last year’s instructions were meant for liturgical celebrations without a congregation, this current memorandum will explain how Holy Week may be celebrated in the Diocese this year with a congregation, although we are still required to observe certain COVID restrictions and limitations.

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.

To the extent possible, parishes should live-stream the liturgies of Holy Week so that the faithful who are not able to come to Church because of COVID may prayerfully unite themselves in their homes. The liturgies should therefore be broadcast live, if at all possible, though they may be posted online for later viewing as well. Priests may wish to assist their people who are watching at home in making an Act of Spiritual Communion at the appropriate time.

In general terms, the current guidelines for the celebration of Mass still apply, including social distancing, reasonable sanitization measures of surfaces and hands, and wearing masks. Currently in the Diocese civil regulations require churches to be occupied up to a 50% capacity limit. Liturgically, holy water fonts ought to remain empty, the Sign of Peace should continue to be omitted, and Communion may be distributed to the faithful under one species only. Concelebrants should receive by intinction; otherwise

separate chalices and even patens may be used for their reception of Communion. Deacons may receive the host alone or may receive from a separate chalice.

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. So, it would be appropriate to have an organist, cantor, lector, and a minimal number of servers to carry out the rites. 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. If the use of more than one cantor is desired, choir size should be limited to few voices arranged according to social distancing practices.

Parishes are encouraged to make liturgical participation aids available online, if possible, for those who spiritually unite themselves by watching at home. This is particularly important in parishes where the liturgies are multilingual. In a multilingual celebration, the integrity of each individual part should be respected, not splitting into multiple languages during a prayer or reading. The Gospel may be proclaimed in two languages, one immediately following the other (the greeting and introduction are said in the first language; the conclusion is said in the second language).

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, though they are not encouraged. 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.

II. Pastoral Letter: "The Great Week"

Bishop Barres has re-issued last year's Pastoral Letter on Holy Week entitled, *The Great Week: A Pilgrimage with the Lord in Holy Week*. The original purpose of the Pastoral Letter was to encourage people to attend the Holy Week liturgies in their home parishes. However, in this time when the liturgies will still be experienced "virtually" by many of our people, it may assist them in better experiencing and understanding the Holy Week liturgies they view on CFN or online from their own parish. Pastors and priests are asked to encourage their parishioners to make use of this resource which may be accessed at its own webpage: www.thegreatweek.com.

III. Diocesan 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. It is up to the discretion of the pastor how to best achieve this with respect to social distancing and sanitizing. "Reconciliation Monday" will be advertised via print media, internet, and radio across Long Island. It is also advisable for a parish to offer the Sacrament of Penance more frequently throughout the entire Lenten season, in order to minimize crowds on the Day of Penance itself.

IV. Palm Sunday

The Palm Sunday Mass will be broadcast live from the Cathedral at 11:00 am on CFN on Palm Sunday.

Palms should be blessed and distributed in the parish churches on Palm Sunday. If ushers are to give out the palms, they should be masked and wearing gloves. If the palms are to be left for the people to take,

they should be distributed at numerous stations throughout the church and especially at the entrances, to avoid crowding.

In parish churches The First Form (The Procession) should not be used because of the problems of crowding and the inability to socially 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.

If the Second Form (The Solemn Entrance) is used, it should omit the gathering of the faithful or their participation in a procession and limit the number of ministers as well. The rite should be carried out in a place visible to parishioners, but not in the midst of the congregation. An area to the side of the sanctuary is ideal. After the blessing of palms, and the proclamation of the palm Gospel, a short procession may take place to the sanctuary. The Penitential Act is omitted, and the Collect of the Mass follows immediately (see *Roman Missal, Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord*, 12-15).

If the Third Form (The Simple Entrance) is used, the palm should be blessed beforehand and the Mass begins in the usual way (see *Roman Missal, Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord*, 16-18).

For the Proclamation of the Passion, the Gospel may be read straight-through by the deacon, a concelebrant, or the priest-celebrant himself (in the absence of a deacon). The Lectionary and Book of the Gospels present the Gospel in this format, which may be more suitable in this year's circumstances, as many parishes do not have worship aids for use by the congregation. Otherwise, the Gospel may be read or sung by three persons who take the parts: Christ, Narrator, and Voice (cf. *Circular Letter on the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts* 66, cf. 33). The part of the "Crowd" (in places where it exists) is taken up by the reader of the "Voice" part. Where possible, the part of Christ should be reserved to the priest (for example, if the Gospel is not sung, or if the priest is capable of singing the part). Deacons who read the Passion ask the priest for his blessing. Lay readers may be used if necessary.

III. 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 in person, if possible. If a priest is unable to attend, he is encouraged to watch the broadcast live on Catholic Faith Network or the livestream on the CFN website and to unite himself spiritually with Bishop Barres and his brother priests, especially for the Renewal of Priestly Promises. Pastors should make their parishioners aware of the Chrism Mass broadcast so that they may participate as well.

In order that all priests who desire to attend may do so, and because of the requirements of social distancing still in effect, 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, so that we may prepare the Cathedral for the purposes of social distancing.

Priests will vest (diocesan stoles & chasubles) in the lower hall of the school gymnasium. Once vested, priests should go immediately to the Cathedral and take their seats in the pews. There will be no procession of priests for the Chrism Mass this year; all but the Bishop will be pre-seated.

Immediately following the Chrism Mass priests may pick up their Holy Oils at the Msgr. Kelly Parish Center behind the Cathedral. For those who may not be able to attend, please give a letter of authorization on parish letterhead to a brother priest to pick them up for you.

IV. Liturgy of the Hours on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday

Many of the faithful have become accustomed to participating in celebrations of the Liturgy of the Hours on the mornings of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. These celebrations should be livestreamed if possible. It would be helpful to have participation guides made available online, so that parishioners can pray along at home. You may advise your parishioners that Morning Prayer will be broadcast live from the Cathedral at 9:00 am on CFN on those days.

Priests and deacons who do not participate in the Mass of the Lord's Supper are obliged to pray Vespers, but those who participate in the Celebration of the Passion of the Lord on Good Friday do not pray Vespers (see *The Liturgy of the Hours*).

Regardless of whether one participates in the Easter Vigil, all are obliged to pray Vespers on Holy Saturday. Those who participate in the Easter Vigil are only released from praying Night Prayer on Holy Saturday and the Office of Readings on Easter Sunday (see *The Liturgy of the Hours*).

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

The Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper will be broadcast live from the Cathedral at 8:00 pm on CFN on Holy Thursday. There may be more than one Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, if the pastor judges this to be advantageous for the faithful. In addition, as per the instruction from the Congregation for Divine Worship last year, a priest who does not concelebrate is permitted to celebrate Mass privately on Holy Thursday again this year. In this way a priest who is, for example, in quarantine, will not be deprived of celebrating Mass on Holy Thursday, the anniversary of the Sacred Priesthood.

Enough hosts should be consecrated at this Mass so that the clergy and faithful may receive Holy Communion on Holy Thursday and Good Friday.

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. Following the Gospel and Homily, the Mass continues with the Universal Prayer. The Creed is not said.

The transfer of the Most Blessed Sacrament may be done, or it may be omitted entirely at the end of Mass (*COVID-19 Decree, 2020*) this year, according to the pastor's discretion.

If it is to be done, it is strongly suggested that there be no procession of the faithful, but that there be a procession of a limited number of clergy *within the Church*, and with the repository located in the Church itself, in a place visible to all. This will enable the faithful to participate in the traditional transfer of the Most Blessed Sacrament, but in a way that avoids crowding.

In churches where the tabernacle is located in a separate chapel, this may serve as the place of repose. Alternatively, a side altar may be used, or a table set up. The procession to the place of repose should only consist of the liturgical ministers. With the repository in the Church, it enables the faithful who wish to stay for private prayer with the Lord to do so in a safe and socially distant manner.

If the Transfer of the Blessed Sacrament is not to take place (see *Roman Missal: Mass of the Lord's Supper*, 44), a much simpler format is followed. Following the reception of Holy Communion, the Blessed Sacrament is placed in the tabernacle. Mass concludes with the Prayer after Communion, Blessing, and

Dismissal. Solemn Adoration concludes at midnight, at which time flowers and candles (other than a sanctuary lamp) are removed.

The Blessed Sacrament remains in the repository or tabernacle through the beginning of the Celebration of the Passion of the Lord. While solemn adoration may not take place, people should be able to visit the Blessed Sacrament up until that time.

VI. Good Friday

The Celebration of the Passion of the Lord will be broadcast live from the Cathedral at 3:00 pm on CFN on Good Friday.

There may be more than one Celebration of the Passion of the Lord on Good Friday, should the pastor deem that to be for the benefit of the faithful.

The Celebration of the Passion of the Lord, which is already quite simple, should take on its usual form, making use of those options that will be more appropriate in the present situation.

There is no concelebration on Good Friday, as the Celebration of the Passion of the Lord is not a Mass. The priest (vested in alb, stole, and red chasuble) may be assisted by one or two deacons, (vested in alb, stole, and red dalmatic). Other clergy who participate wear an alb or cassock and surplice; at communion time, they wear a red stole (*Ceremonial of Bishops*, 315).

For the Proclamation of the Passion, the Gospel may be read straight-through by the deacon, a concelebrant, or the priest-celebrant himself (in the absence of a deacon). The Lectionary and Book of the Gospels present the Gospel in this format, which may be more suitable again in this year's circumstances, especially since the faithful who attend in person will not have worship aids with them in the pew. Otherwise, the Gospel may be read or sung by three persons who take the parts: Christ, Narrator, and Voice/Crowd (cf. *Circular Letter on the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts* 66, cf. 33). Where possible, the part of Christ should be reserved to the priest (for example, if the Gospel is not sung, or if the priest is capable of singing the part). Additional priests or deacons who assist in reading the Passion may wear a red stole for this part. Deacons who read the Passion ask the priest for his blessing. Lay readers may be used if necessary.

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 which has been approved by Bishop Barres:

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.

At the Adoration of the Cross, two options are permitted for the showing. In the present circumstances, the First Form, described here, should be used. **Individual veneration of the Cross by the faithful by kissing is not permitted in the Diocese this year.**

- The deacon or another suitable minister (assisted by two ministers with candles) takes the Cross (covered with a violet veil) and brings it to the priest at standing in front of the altar.
- The Cross is unveiled by the priest in three stages as he sings “Behold the wood of the Cross...” The priest may be assisted by another with the singing. After each time it is sung, all kneel and pray in silence while the priest stands and holds the Cross raised.
- After the showing of the Cross, it is brought to the front of the sanctuary, where two lighted candles are placed on either side.
- The adoration of the Cross should be limited to the clergy participating, who do so on behalf of the faithful in the congregation and at home. The adoration of the Cross by kissing it shall be limited solely to the celebrant. The other clergy who venerate the Cross should do so without kissing or touching, but by a genuflection (or profound bow for those who cannot genuflect).
- Because of social distancing concerns, the people should not individually venerate the Cross this year. It would therefore be appropriate that after the priest and clergy venerate the Cross, the priest invites those watching to adore the Cross in a few words, after which he holds the Cross higher for a brief time, in which the people adore in silence (see *Roman Missal: Friday of the Passion of the Lord*, 19).

After the Adoration of the Cross, the Cross is placed in front of the altar with the candlesticks. The Celebration continues with the Communion Rite. The altar is covered with the altar cloth, and the corporal and Missal are placed on it. A deacon, or the priest himself, brings the Blessed Sacrament from the tabernacle to the altar following a shorter route, while wearing a red or white humeral veil.

After the priest receives Communion himself, he gives Communion, using appropriate precautions, to the deacons and other clergy, saying, “The Body of Christ.” Then the priest and the other ministers give Communion to the faithful in the usual way according to pandemic guidelines.

When Communion has concluded, the Blessed Sacrament is put away in an appropriate place outside the church, or if necessary, it may be placed in the tabernacle (*Roman Missal: Friday of the Passion of the Lord*, 29). This is done without ceremony (the humeral veil is not worn, and a short route is taken).

The Celebration concludes with the Prayer after Communion and Prayer over the People. The priest, assisting deacon(s), and ministers genuflect to the Cross and depart in silence.

VII. The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night

The Easter Vigil Mass will be broadcast live from the Cathedral at 8:00 pm on CFN on Holy Saturday.

Special care should be taken to celebrate the Vigil well, even in these unusual circumstances, as it is “is the greatest and most noble of all solemnities” (*Roman Missal: The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night*, 2).

The “Note to Bishops and Episcopal Conferences on the Celebration of Holy Week 2021,” issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments on February 17, 2021, permits the decree of last year, “In the Time of COVID-19”, to be applied this year as well. That decree granted permission to omit the blessing of the Paschal Fire and the Procession and to begin the Mass of the Vigil at the front of the sanctuary, rather than at the doors of the church. If this year a pastor decides to use the decree from last year and do a simplified Easter Vigil, the first part of the Mass takes place as follows:

- After beginning with the Sign of the Cross and the Greeting (The Lord be with you), the priest gives an instruction to help those present and those watching remotely to participate, which can follow the words given in the Missal (9: “Dear brothers and sisters, on this most sacred night...”) or be said in similar words.
- The Preparation of the Candle immediately follows (11, 12).
- The candle is then lit and the priest says, “May the light of Christ rising in glory...” (14).
- The Procession with its triple acclamation of “Lumen Christi” is omitted.
- The paschal candle is then placed in its stand near the ambo or in the middle of the sanctuary. At this time, all the lights in the church are turned on, except for the altar candles (17). The *Gloria* is the appropriate moment at which the altar candles lit (31).
- The *Exsultet* is then proclaimed. Before the *Exsultet*, a deacon asks the priest for his blessing. The book and the paschal candle are incensed before the proclamation. During the proclamation of the *Exsultet*, a lay person omits the parts near the beginning which are bracketed out.
- The Liturgy of the Word takes its usual format. In parishes where the Easter Vigil is multilingual, it may be helpful to have a participation guide available for download online.
- If there are to be no baptisms, the blessing of holy water may be omitted, and the liturgy proceeds directly to the Renewal of Baptismal Promises (*COVID-19 II Decree*; see *Roman Missal: The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night*, 55). The sprinkling is omitted.
- The Renewal of Baptismal Promises is followed by the Universal Prayer, and Mass continues in the usual way, making note that Preface I of Easter is used, that there are special inserts in Eucharistic Prayer I, and that there is a Solemn Blessing and special form of the Dismissal with the double Alleluia.

If, however, the pastor decides to celebrate the Easter Vigil in the usual way this year, some adaptations are necessary because of the continuing pandemic:

- The faithful should be in their places in the church for the blessing of the fire, which may be carried out at the doors of the church. Only a limited number of liturgical ministers will be in the Procession with the Paschal Candle. Candles for the faithful may be used, or they may be omitted. If used, the candles may be placed on the seats in the church in advance.

- It is permitted for the Sacraments of Initiation to take place at the Easter Vigil or on Easter Sunday this year. Generally speaking, the Reception into Full Communion of non-Catholic Christians should take place apart from the Vigil, but it may be done at the Vigil or even on Easter Sunday if pastorally necessary. Catholics should receive the Sacrament of Confirmation on the Solemnity of Pentecost or on another suitable day, following the Diocesan guidelines, but preferably not at the Easter Vigil.
- 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.
- For the sprinkling with Holy Water at the conclusion of the Renewal of Baptismal Promises, the priest need not move around the church. He may stand at the foot of the sanctuary and sprinkle from there (as is practiced at the Vatican).

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. If an individual is ill or is uncomfortable receiving the Sacraments in this time at the Vigil in a crowded Church, a pastor may decide to administer them at another more suitable time, and even privately, for the benefit of the faithful and in accord with the rules set forth in the liturgical books.

VIII. Easter Sunday

The Easter Sunday Mass will be broadcast live from the Cathedral at 11:00 am on CFN on Easter Sunday.

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

At the Mass of Easter Sunday, the Creed may be said, or the Renewal of Baptismal Promises may take place after the homily, according to the text used at the Easter Vigil. The sprinkling may be omitted. If 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. Following the Renewal of Baptismal Promises the Creed is omitted, and the Mass continues with the Universal Prayer (the Prayer of the Faithful).

IX. Miscellaneous Lenten Notes

A. Décor of the Church

Churches and chapels should not be decorated with flowers during the season of Lent, with the exception of the Solemnity of St. Joseph (March 19), *Laetare* Sunday (March 22), and the Solemnity of the Annunciation (March 25). Emphasis should be placed on sparsity and absence. Decorating with desert plants and sand displays are not necessary and may actually contradict the theme of sparsity and absence. Modest use of “Lenten purple” (lighter purple) cloths and banners may be used.

On the Fifth Sunday of Lent, crosses, images, and statues may be covered with red or purple cloth, per the *Passiontide* tradition of the Church. *Crosses* should be unveiled after the Good Friday afternoon liturgy; *images and statues* are to be unveiled at the beginning of the Easter Vigil. This custom of veiling is an optional practice and may be done at the discretion of the pastor (*praenotanda* for the Fifth Sunday of Lent, *Roman Missal*).

If weddings take place during the season of Lent, couples are to be informed about the

Lenten regulations with regard to flowers and decorations.

B. Holy Water During Lent

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.

C. Liturgical Music

The *Alleluia* is never sung or recited during the season of Lent. The *Gloria* is not sung or recited in Lent with the exception of the Solemnities of St. Joseph (March 19) and the Annunciation (March 25), when the *Gloria* is mandated. Also, the *Gloria* is to be used at weddings during Lent, when the proper Nuptial Mass is celebrated.

The use of the organ and other instruments during Lent is only to sustain singing; no solo instrumental music is permitted except on the Solemnity of St. Joseph (March 19), *Laetare* Sunday (March 22), and the Solemnity of the Annunciation (March 25).

D. Eucharistic Prayers

During the season of Lent, priests have the option to use the *Eucharistic Prayers for Reconciliation I and II*, found in the middle of the *Roman Missal* (often tabbed as “R1” and “R2”), within the section “Appendix to the Order of Mass.” Prefaces for Lent should be used in conjunction with these Eucharistic Prayers, even though they have their own prefaces. *Eucharistic Prayer IV* may not be used in Lent or Easter, as it has its own proper preface.

E. Abstinence and Fasting

All Catholics who have reached their fourteenth year are bound to abstain entirely from meat/poultry on Ash Wednesday and all the Fridays of Lent. All Catholics between the ages of eighteen and fifty-nine inclusive are also bound to observe the law of fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. This means limiting oneself to a single full meal and avoiding food between meals. Two other light meals, which together do not equal a full meal, may be taken during the day. Those whose work or health would be impaired are excused from fast and abstinence. Individual conscience should decide proper cause for excuse. A more serious reason is required to excuse oneself from Ash Wednesday and Good Friday fast and abstinence.