



233/2020
23 March 2020

Dear Priests and Deacons,

This information offers helpful insight and direction for you relative to the upcoming Holy Week and Easter celebrations keeping in mind the current restrictions in place due to the coronavirus health crisis. Please know of my prayerful support for all of you during these difficult days.

Worldwide Opportunities for Prayer

Pope Francis invited members of all Christian confessions and the heads of Christian Churches and leaders of Christian communities to join in praying the Our Father together at noon (local time) on Wednesday, March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation.

Friday, March 27, at 6:00 p.m. (Rome Time - 1:00 p.m. EDT) Pope Francis will preside over a prayer service in front of an "empty" St. Peter's Square, which will include scripture readings and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. At the end of the event, he will offer the traditional *Urbi et Orbi*, offering all who participate via the media a plenary indulgence. Other Plenary Indulgence opportunities are detailed at the end of this document.

Some general norms for livestreaming Masses during the coronavirus pandemic:

On Sunday, March 22th, under the direction of Ohio Governor Mike DeWine, Ohio Department of Health Director Amy Acton, M.D., MPH issued a director's order to require all Ohioans to stay in their homes to prevent the further spread of COVID-19 beginning at 11:59 p.m. on Monday, March 23, 2020. This order prohibits holding gatherings of any size and closes all nonessential businesses.

- In light of this new regulation, **livestreaming of Masses may not involve more than four people in the worship space**, for example, a celebrant, deacon, cameraperson, and a minister. All present must maintain a minimum distance of six feet from one another at all times.
- All individuals present in the worship space should have taken their temperatures at home before arriving. Anyone with a temperature of over 100.4° must remain at home and self-quarantine for 14 days.
- Any minister who accompanies the celebrant may serve as cameraperson, instrumentalist, psalmist/cantor, or all three roles. An altar server is not to be used.
- The priest should serve as lector. If the deacon will be preaching, then the deacon should serve as lector instead of the priest.
- Those present should make the people's responses clearly and audibly.
- The minister/psalmist/cantor present may sing the responsorial psalm response, with the priest reading or chanting the verses, or may chant the entire psalm, with the priest making the response, not from the ambo but from another location, preferably off-camera.

- Music familiar to the parish community is recommended.
- In consideration of the pastoral good of the faithful, only the priest may receive Holy Communion during the livestream broadcast. Any ministers present may receive Holy Communion under the form of bread alone following the end of the livestream broadcast.

Confession and General Absolution

After prayerful and serious consideration, the diocesan administrator, in consultation with Vatican directives and diocesan Senior Staff, has determined that the current circumstances are not appropriate for General Absolution, as congregating in large numbers for the purpose of giving General Absolution would violate the current stay-at-home regulations.

Every consideration should be given to offering the Sacrament of Reconciliation to individuals who request it keeping in mind the governor's current order to stay at home. It is up to the individual priest to determine the seriousness of the pastoral need. To help minimize the risk of exposure, we ask for the following considerations to be utilized:

- Move out of the confessional into the body of the church or, if weather permits, outside, in order to provide a safer space between you and the penitent.
- If possible, utilize a screen to block the air flow between the priest and the penitent. The penitent should always have the option to celebrate the Sacrament anonymously.
- Ensure at least six feet of space between the presider and the penitent.
- It is preferable to utilize a chair without armrests or cleansing the armrests with sanitizer between each person. You may also consider celebrating the Sacrament standing so that a proper distance is kept and no surfaces are touched.

It may be helpful to remind parishioners who request confession of Pope Francis' recent remarks, which echo the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

The pope said..., "Do what the Catechism (of the Catholic Church) says. It is very clear: If you cannot find a priest to confess to, speak directly with God, your father, and tell him the truth. Say, 'Lord, I did this, this, this. Forgive me,' and ask for pardon with all your heart."

Make an act of contrition, the pope said, and promise God, "'I will go to confession afterward, but forgive me now.' And immediately you will return to a state of grace with God."

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, N. 1452, says: "When it arises from a love by which God is loved above all else, contrition is called 'perfect' - contrition of charity. Such contrition remits venial sins; it also obtains forgiveness of mortal sins if it includes the firm resolution to have recourse to sacramental confession as soon as possible."

"As the catechism teaches," Pope Francis said, "you can draw near to God's forgiveness without having a priest at hand."

Celebrating the Triduum

On Thursday, March 19, 2020, the Vatican issued a Decree (Prot. N. 135/20) "In time of COVID-19" regarding the celebration of the Paschal Triduum during the coronavirus pandemic. The English language section of this document is attached.

If at all possible, singing should not be absent at Triduum liturgies which are livestreamed. Melodies familiar to the people are recommended.

Priests may concelebrate Holy Week Masses where multiple priests live together in the rectory making certain social distancing is maintained at all times.

Palm Sunday

The Solemn Entrance should not be done. Rather, follow the directives in no. 17, paragraph two, Third Form: The Simple Entrance for Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion in the *Roman Missal, third edition* (pg. 283): "The Priest, as soon as he has arrived at the altar and venerated it, greets the [minister], reads [or sings] the Entrance Antiphon, and continues the Mass in the usual way."

The Palm Sunday Passion of the Lord may be read chorally, with the priest at the chair or the altar and the minister elsewhere.

Palms may be blessed either before or after the Mass. The blessed Palms may be made available to the faithful following the liturgy and over the next few days with the following guidelines:

- A time-span for the distribution of blessed palms should be announced in advance.
- If at all possible, the distribution of blessed palms should be done outside.
- Social distancing must be maintained in the distribution of blessed palms.
- Distribution should not be hand-to-hand, but rather the blessed palms should be spread out on a table with some distance between palms possible. Multiple distribution points is ideal.

Holy Thursday

The Vatican has extended to all priests the exceptional faculty to celebrate the Mass of the Lord's Supper without the people.

- The rite of the reception of the Holy Oils should be omitted.
- The washing of feet is to be omitted.
- The procession of the Blessed Sacrament to the place of repose is to be omitted, and the Blessed Sacrament is to be kept in the tabernacle.
- Priests who are unable to celebrate Mass should instead pray Vespers of the day.

Good Friday

The Good Friday Passion of the Lord may be read chorally, with the priest at the chair or the altar and the minister elsewhere.

The Solemn Intercessions should be done by the celebrant and minister in alternation, with the addition of one of the following as the eleventh intercession:

Option 1

(minister)

**Let us prayer, dearly beloved,
to God the Father almighty,
that he may heal those who are suffering from coronavirus infection,
comfort those who's loved ones have died,
reassure those who feel isolated and afraid,
relieve those who feel lost and despairing,
and console those who hunger for the Body and Blood of Christ.**

Prayer in silence. Then the Priest says:

**Almighty ever-living God,
sure support of all who suffer and mourn,
may the prayers of all who are in pain
due to the coronavirus pandemic
feel your loving mercy as a soothing balm to their hearts.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Option 2 (from Rita Thiron, FDLC)

minister

**Let us pray, dearly beloved,
to God the Father almighty,
that he may extend his hand in mercy
to all those affected by the Coronavirus pandemic.**

Prayer in silence. Then the Priest says:

**Almighty ever-living God,
heal those who are ill,
comfort those who mourn,
give solace to all who are afraid and alone,
and protect those who are providing medical care.
Make us instruments of your peace
among our brothers and sisters.
In your mercy, alleviate our fears
and eliminate this scourge,
so that we may come together again
to give you praise and to build your Kingdom.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The Adoration of the Holy Cross should be done according to the First Form, no. 15, pg. 329.

Holy Communion is to be taken from the tabernacle and returned to the tabernacle, in

accordance with the Vatican's COVID-19 Decree regarding the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper.

Holy Saturday

In parishes which have followed the custom, the blessing of Easter food on Holy Saturday is canceled.

Preparation Rites for adults approaching Christian Initiation are to be postponed. Instructions will be forthcoming regarding rescheduling Christian Initiation in the local parish.

Easter Vigil

The preparation and lighting of the fire is to be omitted. The Paschal candle is lit, the procession is omitted, and the Easter Proclamation (Exsultet) follows. While normally sung at the ambo, the Exsultet may be sung by the deacon from his chair (distanced from the priest's chair) or by a cantor in another location. The Liturgy of the Word then takes place.

Christian Initiation is omitted. The Renewal of Baptismal Promises alone is necessary. The Liturgy of the Eucharist then follows.

Those who have no possibility of uniting themselves to the Paschal Vigil celebrated in a church should pray the Office for Readings for Easter Sunday.

Easter Sunday

The Renewal of Baptismal Promises should be omitted.

Plenary Indulgences

The Apostolic Penitentiary has issued a [decree](#) granting plenary indulgences to "the faithful suffering from the Covid-19 virus, commonly known as coronavirus, as well as to healthcare workers, family members and all those who in any capacity, including through prayer, care for them."

First and foremost, a plenary indulgence is offered to all people suffering from the coronavirus who are in hospitals or quarantined at home. It is also offered, under the same conditions, to healthcare workers, family members, and caregivers. Furthermore, an indulgence is also offered to all those who, during this pandemic, pray for it to end, pray for those who are suffering, and [pray] for those whom the Lord has called to Himself. (Cardinal Mauro Piacenza, Major Penitentiary, the head of the Apostolic Penitentiary)

The following conditions apply:

The faithful, with a spirit detached from any sin, unite spiritually through the media to one of the following:

- A celebration of Holy Mass
- A recitation of the Holy Rosary
- The Way of the Cross or other forms of devotion
- Recite the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and a pious invocation to the Blessed Virgin Mary

The faithful also should have the will to fulfil the usual conditions (sacramental confession,

Eucharistic communion and prayer according to the Holy Father's intentions), as soon as possible.

The Apostolic Penitentiary also willingly grants a Plenary Indulgence to those faithful in their homes or residences who implore Almighty God for an end to the epidemic, relief for those who are afflicted and eternal salvation for those whom the Lord has called to Himself by means of one of the following:

- Read the Holy Scriptures for at least half an hour
- Recite the Holy Rosary
- Recite the Way of the Cross
- Recite the Chaplet of Divine Mercy

The Church prays for those who find themselves unable to receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and of the Viaticum, entrusting each and every one to divine Mercy by virtue of the communion of saints and granting the faithful a Plenary Indulgence on the point of death, provided that they are duly disposed and have recited a few prayers during their lifetime (in this case the Church makes up for the three usual conditions required).

Be assured of my continued prayers for you during these stressful times. In your charity kindly, remember me in your prayers. I remain

Fraternally yours in Christ Jesus,



Rev. Donald P. Oleksiak
Diocesan Administrator