



Memorandum

Cathedral Square Plaza

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

MEMORANDUM

To: Priests and Deacons
From: Bishop Edward C. Malesic
Date: 22 February 2021
Re: Holy Week in time of COVID

Dear brothers in Christ,

I continue to be grateful to all of you for your faithful dedication and commitment in your ministry and service to the faithful. I realize many are feeling the effects of COVID exhaustion and most of us never thought we would be dealing with pandemic issues in 2021. I encourage you to continue to make every effort to take care of yourselves, stay healthy and comply with state and local health and government directives and diocesan protocols. This too shall pass and we continue to put all our hope in the Lord.

Although more and more people will be vaccinated, we must continue to be vigilant in keeping our churches safe. Therefore, upon the consultation with and recommendation of medical professionals I remind you that the wearing of masks and social distancing are still required in our churches and parish buildings and urge you to be vigilant in complying with these norms. The ongoing diocesan policy requiring masks and social distancing has the goal of preserving the life and health of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We must also take care of our health care workers who have been greatly tested over these last few months by this pandemic. I do understand that not all parishioners are in agreement with this practice, some of them are quite vocal and contrary; however, they are relatively few in number and we must continue to follow the advice of our best science and practical common sense. In short, we must be pastors who protect the flock. Certainly, we must not encourage unsafe practices.

If any adjustments have been made to the Order of Mass during the pandemic, such as omitting the Gloria or the Creed, or distributing Holy Communion after the Final Blessing, the ordinary liturgical practices should now be restored and the proper Order of Mass observed. If you have questions, please refer to the [pandemic liturgical guidelines on the diocesan website](#), or call the Office for Worship.

To ensure adequate physical distancing, it may be prudent to use some form of advance reservation method, online or otherwise, to gauge and regulate attendance for Palm Sunday, Triduum, and Easter Sunday liturgies. Of course, this depends on the circumstances, including the size of your church and total number of parishioners. The following directives have been done in consultation with the Catholic Medical Association, which is a group of Catholic doctors, nurses and medical professionals who advise me on a number of issues. These directives are established to protect and ensure to the best of our ability the health and wellbeing of our parishioners. Your cooperation and implementation of these directives are expected and appreciated.

Palm Sunday

At all Palm Sunday liturgies, the blessing of palms and the proclamation of the Gospel of the Lord's entrance into Jerusalem takes place as usual (*Roman Missal* pg. 283); however, only the ministers should participate in the procession. The distribution of palms should take place as the congregants enter the church. Blessed palms can be handed out by ushers who are properly protected with face masks or palms may be placed on tables or in containers, instructing the faithful to maintain physical distancing and being certain to take the palms they have touched.

Chrism Mass

The diocesan Chrism Mass will be celebrated on Tuesday of Holy Week, March 30, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. In-person attendance will be by invitation only. Please plan to join in prayer via the [livestream of the liturgy on the diocesan website](#).

Pastors will have the opportunity to sign up for a drive-thru pick-up time for your parish holy oils. A link to the online sign-up will be sent to your diocesan email the week prior to Holy Week.

Holy Thursday

In diocesan parishes where physical distancing will be difficult to maintain due to larger than expected attendance during the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, I hereby give permission for an additional Mass of the Lord's Supper to be celebrated on Holy Thursday, at the discretion of the pastor (*Roman Missal*, pg. 299, no. 3).

The Rite of the Reception of the Holy Oils may be done in conjunction with the Mass of the Lord's Supper, or it may be done at another time.

After the Homily, where a pastoral reason suggests it, the Washing of Feet follows; however, the foot-washing may be omitted. If pastors choose to include the Washing of Feet, only those who have received both vaccines should have their feet washed. It is not recommended to do a large-

scale foot-washing of the entire assembly this year. Please remember that only feet are to be washed. The number of those who will have feet washed can be limited to only a few.

The procession for the Transfer of the Blessed Sacrament should include only the ministers, not the entire congregation (*Roman Missal*, pg. 313, no. 38). In order to accommodate physical distancing requirements, the altar of repose should be located in the main church this year to allow for social distancing for the period of adoration after Mass. As with last year, the Eucharist may also be reserved in the tabernacle due to a special permission granted by the Holy See for the time of this pandemic.

Good Friday

In diocesan parishes where physical distancing will be difficult to maintain due to larger than expected attendance at the celebration of the Lord's Passion and Adoration of the Holy Cross, I hereby give permission for an additional celebration of the Lord's Passion and Veneration of the Cross to be celebrated on Good Friday, at the discretion of the pastor (*Roman Missal*, pg. 314, no. 4). The second liturgy should not be in the morning.

A special intercession should be included as the 11th of the Solemn Intercessions. Unless Rome provides a different text for 2021, the text from 2020 should be used. This text in English and in Spanish may be found on the [Office for Worship website under Resources](#).

The Adoration of the Holy Cross may take place in either of the two forms provided in the *Roman Missal*. If, because of the large number of people or arrangement of the church, it is not possible for all to approach the cross in procession, the individual adoration may be done by only the priest and a few of the faithful, with the majority of the assembly adoring the cross in silence from their seats. (*Roman Missal*, pg. 330, no. 19) In either case, the cross should not be venerated by touch, especially not by a traditional kiss; a genuflection or bow of the head would be appropriate. Social distancing should be observed if the congregation approaches in procession.

Holy Communion is to be taken from the tabernacle and replaced in the tabernacle, in accordance with the Vatican's COVID-19 Decree regarding the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper, which is carried over by permission for 2021.

Easter Vigil

The earliest start time for the Easter Vigil this year is 8:30 p.m. Only the priest and other ministers should participate in the blessing of the fire and preparation of the candle and the procession into the church. Candles are not to be used by the congregation during the Lucernarium and the Renewal of Baptismal Promises because of the increased possibility of spreading the virus when extinguishing the candles. The Lumen Christi is sung as usual with only the ministers holding lit candles in the procession; or the blessing of the fire, preparation

of the candle and procession into the church may be omitted entirely. If omitted, the Paschal candle is lit within the church, 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.

Christian Initiation may be omitted, and celebrated at another time, at the discretion of the pastor. The Renewal of Baptismal Promises alone is necessary. Baptism should be done by pouring, not immersion, and the water used for baptizing each individual should afterward be given to the ground via the sacrarium or otherwise. Water should not be re-used for subsequent baptisms. Confirmation should proceed per the pandemic Confirmation Ritual Guide for pastors, available on the [Office for Worship website](#). Candidates for full communion may be received into the Church at another time.

Holy Water Fonts

Holy water fonts should remain empty. You may wish to provide small pre-prepared bottles of holy water for distribution at the end of Mass on Easter.

Miscellaneous

The dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains in effect until further notice. You are encouraged to direct those who are unable to attend Mass to participate via live stream at your parish or through the diocesan website at www.dioceseofcleveland.org.