



**UPDATE ON LITURGICAL DIRECTIVES
AND INFORMATION FOR THE CELEBRATION
OF PALM SUNDAY AND THE SACRED PASCHAL TRIDUUM
OFFICE FOR DIVINE WORSHIP
ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA
TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2020**

The public worship of Almighty God that takes place with the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy is the duty and privilege of the Church in all her members. The Coronavirus (COVID 19) challenges us to celebrate the Mysteries of Christ for the glory of the Father and our sanctification with reasonable limitations and in cooperation with directives from government and health officials to stem the spread of the virus. In every instance the following liturgical directives serve the pastoral needs of the clergy and faithful of the Archdiocese. It is most important that as members of the same local Church everyone observe them as stated for the benefit of all.

PUBLIC MASSES

The March 17, 2020 suspension of all public Masses in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia remains in force until further notice. This includes all Sunday and weekday Masses with the faithful.

- Priests are to continue to offer Holy Mass on Sundays and weekdays **privately without any publication** of when these Masses take place.
- Mass can be celebrated in select Catholic nursing homes depending on local restrictions, seminaries, monasteries and convents during this period as they are not considered public. In monasteries and convents where Mass is not celebrated the plan for a Communion Service found in the ritual book, *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass*, Chapter 1, is to be observed.
- Priests are to be attentive to honoring all Mass intentions for already scheduled Masses during this period. It is not permitted to collect these intentions into one Mass.

CHURCHES ARE TO REMAIN OPEN

All churches, following a possible published modified schedule, are to be open and available for the faithful to pray, especially to visit the Most Blessed Sacrament, in a manner that respects and follows current guidelines from governmental agencies concerning crowd sizes and gatherings. Exposition, with a required adorer, is also possible during this period. There is an urgent need for the Church to be a place of refuge and comfort for the faithful with open churches. If it becomes necessary to close our churches, then this directive will be updated.

- In open churches, the limitation of numbers and social distancing, as reasonably as possible, are to be observed.
- Signage indicating the church is open and for what hours is to be employed. This same information should be posted on parish websites.
- As of now, all adoration/exposition chapels are to be closed and the Most Blessed Sacrament is to be properly reposed in the tabernacle. This is especially helpful to the elderly adorers in these chapels. Those who ordinarily make use of the exposition/adoration chapels should be reminded that adoration continues in the main church.

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE AND RECONCILIATION

The seriousness of the Coronavirus does not dispense from the availability of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Individual confession is the ordinary way of celebrating this Sacrament and should still be available at published times. Priests are strongly encouraged to hear confessions outside of the confessional during this period.

- Priests, according to the most recent Vatican directives, may choose to hear confessions in a ventilated place outside the confessional, adopt suitable distance and use a protective mask if thought necessary. In every instance the inviolability of the sacramental seal is to be safeguarded.
- The faithful, who desire to celebrate the Sacrament but are inhibited for one reason or another should be catechized about the benefit of perfect contrition for sins and the gift of special indulgences at this time. Catechesis for publication on both of these practices will be on the website of the Office for Divine Worship. For convenience sake, here is a description of perfect contrition:

Where the individual faithful find themselves in the painful impossibility of receiving sacramental absolution, it should be remembered that perfect contrition, coming from the love of God, beloved above all things, expressed by a sincere request for forgiveness (that which the penitent is at present able to express) and accompanied by votum confessionis, that is, by the firm resolution to have recourse, as soon as possible, to sacramental confession, obtains forgiveness of sins, even mortal ones (cf. CCC, no. 1452).

Thus, perfect contrition requires • the love of God • the sincere desire for forgiveness • the ardent commitment to receive the sacrament of reconciliation when available.

- The third form in the *Rite of Penance*, frequently called general absolution, is not permitted during this period in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, most of all because it requires both a grave necessity and a gathering of people. In addition, this form of absolution cannot take place without the explicit permission of the Archbishop.

PALM SUNDAY, HOLY WEEK AND THE SACRED PASCHAL TRIDUUM

The celebration of these most holy days of the church year require a pastoral attentiveness so that the saving events commemorated are carried out with faith and devotion and the faithful have access to them in whatever way is possible. All possible electronic and spiritual resources are to be made available to the faithful to enter into these days which celebrate the greatest mysteries of our redemption. The following directives derive from the recent instructions from the Holy See and the USCCB for the celebration of the Triduum.

In general:

- There will be no public celebrations of Palm Sunday and of the Sacred Paschal Triduum.
- All celebrations will take place in parish churches. It is not necessary for every parish to celebrate the liturgies of the Sacred Paschal Triduum. Pastors of smaller parishes may combine for these liturgies.
 - The Sacred Paschal Triduum may also be celebrated in seminaries, monasteries and convents.
- The manner for the celebration of these liturgies is to follow what is described in the *Roman Missal* with the exception for what is listed below.
- Sufficient sacred and liturgical ministers, if possible, are to assist for the dignified celebration of these liturgies. It is not necessary to have the usual full complement of ministers. The limitation of numbers and social distancing, as reasonably as possible, are to be observed.
- Liturgical music, if possible, should be in place for the celebration of these liturgies, perhaps with only a cantor and accompanist or cantor alone.

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

- Palm Sunday Mass is not to be celebrated publicly.
- The Second or Third Form in the *Roman Missal* is to be used for the Entrance. The First Form, the Procession is not to be used due to civil restrictions.

- Palm is to be blessed and available for distribution at a later time determined locally. Palms should not be left for public distribution or pick-up due to handling precautions. It may be necessary to refrigerate or keep the palm cool until future distribution to prevent mold and rot.
- Although Palm Sunday Mass will not be celebrated publicly, the palm distributed to the faithful on this day has great meaning. It is a sacramental rich in power to remind all of us of Christ's victory over sin and death. It certainly has special significance during the pandemic.
- *Pastors are reminded not to cancel their palm order.*

HOLY THURSDAY AND THE EVENING MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

- The Mass of the Lord's Supper is not to be celebrated publicly.
 - Priests have the permission of the Holy See to celebrate Mass without a congregation as an exception to the law this year. Otherwise they pray the Vespers of day.
- The washing of feet, which is always optional, is to be omitted in all instances.
- The procession of the Blessed Sacrament to the place of repose at the end of Mass is to be omitted. The Blessed Sacrament is returned to the tabernacle. The altar is stripped at a convenient time.
 - *On Holy Thursday, Holy Communion may only be distributed to the faithful during Mass but it may be brought to the sick at any hour of the day.*

GOOD FRIDAY CELEBRATION OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

- The Celebration of the Passion of the Lord is not to be celebrated publicly.
- The following is to be added as the 11th Solemn Intercession as suggested by the USCCB with the permission of Archbishop Perez:

XI. For an end to the pandemic

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.

Prayer in silence. Then the Priest says:

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.

R. Amen.

- The veneration of the cross, by those assisting at the Celebration of the Passion of the Lord, should take place with a genuflection or a bow. There is no need to touch or kiss the cross this year. The altar is stripped at a convenient time.

- *On Good Friday, Holy Communion is distributed apart from the Celebration of the Passion of the Lord only to the sick. On Holy Saturday, Holy Communion is only given as Viaticum.*

THE EASTER VIGIL IN THE HOLY NIGHT

- The Easter Vigil is not to be celebrated publicly.
 - Those who cannot in anyway participate in the Easter Vigil pray the Office of Readings for Easter Sunday.
- The Solemn Beginning of the Vigil or *Lucernarium*—the preparation and lighting of the fire--is omitted. The Paschal Candle (previously prepared privately) is lit, the procession is omitted and the *Exultet* follows.
- The Liturgy of Word takes place as usual according to what is described in the *Roman Missal*.
- For the Baptismal Liturgy, only the Renewal of Baptismal Promises is necessary.
 - *In accord with the directives from the Holy See and the USCCB, the Sacraments of Christian Initiation are delayed and do not take place at the Easter Vigil this year.*
 - *Easter Water may be blessed, as indicated in the Roman Missal, and made available to the faithful at a future time.*
- The Liturgy of the Eucharist follows as usual.

EASTER SUNDAY

- Easter Sunday Mass is not to be celebrated publicly.

CHRISM MASS

The Chrism Mass will not be celebrated publicly. Instead, the Archbishop will celebrate it in a private manner on Monday of Holy Week, April 6, 2020 at 7:00 PM at the Cathedral Basilica.

- Additional information will be forthcoming for the clergy and faithful to participate via live-streaming.
- The Oils of Catechumens and of the Sick will be blessed and the Oil of Chrism will be consecrated.
- The new oils will be distributed at a future date. In the meantime for this year, parishes and institutions are to continue the use of the old oils into Easter Time.

SACRAMENTS OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN

Archbishop Perez gives permission for the full sacramental initiation of adults—Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist—that ordinarily takes place at the Easter Vigil to take place at a time mutually convenient for all.

- *A separate instruction will follow for the rites and texts to be used for these celebrations.*

The full sacramental initiation of school age children—Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist—can take place at any time mutually convenient for all. Likewise, reception into full communion of the Catholic Church can take place at any time mutually convenient to all. The Archbishop grants the faculty to priests of the Archdiocese to confirm adult Catholics even beyond Pentecost until further notice.

The Baptism of Children is to take place one child at a time with due attention given to the number of participants and social distancing.

CONFIRMATIONS FOR SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

The celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation throughout the Archdiocese of Philadelphia is further postponed until Easter Monday, April 13, 2020. The Bishop celebrant of the conferral of Confirmation, in consultation with the pastor, will make arrangements for a new date for the celebration. Pastors are asked to inform their parishioners and all those involved with the Confirmations scheduled during this additional period of postponement.

PARTICIPATION WITH LIVE STREAMING THE SACRED LITURGY

In planning for the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy during this period of the Coronavirus pandemic, it is helpful to those watching from their homes to be reminded to participate spiritually, especially with information on how to make a spiritual Communion.

- Options should be chosen that engage the faithful in terms of known responses and music, postures and gestures. For example, making use of the option of standing and kneeling during the Solemn Intercessions and venerating a crucifix in their home on Good Friday. Whatever will help the faithful to participate virtually is a good thing and this value should not be underestimated.
- The typical decorating and appointments in our churches should take place this year, such as veiling statues, decorating with palm and Easter flowers, as appropriate and possible. These familiar visual elements will help draw the faithful into this holy time of the year.
- Church bells, if possible, should be rung at the traditional times—six am, noon, six pm—calling the clergy and faithful to prayer in their homes with the *Angelus* and

the *Regina Coeli*. Church bells are typically not rung during the Sacred Paschal Triduum, however, this year doing so will be a helpful reminder to pray at home.

- Parishes and institutions are asked to disseminate widely the many pastoral and spiritual resources available to the clergy and faithful during this period. Please see, <http://archphila.org/resources/>.

Thank you so very much for your generous assistance during these most unusual times in the life of our local church. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at fr.dgill@archphila.org.

In Christ,
Father Dennis Gill,
Director, Office for Divine Worship