



OFFICE OF DIVINE WORSHIP

Directives for Holy Week 2021

February 25, 2021



In 2020, the parishes of the Archdiocese of Newark were shut down during Holy Week due to the pandemic. The liturgies were celebrated virtually for the participation of parishioners through livestream technology. In 2021 parishioners are able to attend the liturgies of Holy Week but in limited numbers and with restrictions. The directives for wearing masks, social distancing, and sanitizing remain in force.

The following document has been prepared to assist parishes in safely celebrating these liturgies. They should be prepared for in advance and celebrated with reverence, dignity and beauty. Even with restrictions, these holy days should foster a deep encounter with the Paschal Mystery of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Holy See previously released two decrees regarding the celebrations of Holy Week during Covid-19. According to the February 17, 2021, "Note to Bishops" from the Holy See, these indications given last year are still valid:

- Decree in time of Covid-19 Prot N 153/20
- Decree in time of Covid-19 II Prot N 154/20

The Office of Divine Worship has taken these documents and delineated their instructions below with commentary. Quotes from the documents themselves are in bold; Worship Office commentary follows. The documents will be referred to as "Covid-19" and "Covid-19 II." There are also references to the *Roman Missal*.

All directives below are subject to change if new instructions are promulgated by the Holy See between now and Holy Week. All directives below are given by way of exception for the year 2021 and are only valid for Holy Week 2021.

Seminaries, houses of clergy, monasteries and religious communities shall follow the indications of this decree. (Covid-19)

All questions regarding these directives can be directed to the Office of Divine Worship.

HOLY WEEK – GENERAL COMMENTS

Given that the date of Easter cannot be transferred, in the countries which have been struck by the disease and where restrictions around the assembly and movement of people have been imposed, Bishops and Priests may celebrate the rites of Holy Week without the presence of the people and in a suitable place, avoiding concelebration and omitting the sign of peace. (Covid-19 II)

The faithful should be informed of the beginning times of the celebrations so that they can prayerfully unite themselves in their homes. Means of live (not recorded) telematic broadcasts can be of help. (Covid-19 II)

Currently in the Archdiocese of Newark, assemblies of 50% capacity are permitted in churches; however, six feet social distancing between households must be maintained. Therefore, churches may need to limit seating to less than 50% according to their particular layout. Masks, social distancing and sanitizing between liturgies continues to be required. If concelebration is practiced, concelebrants should wear masks and observe social distancing both when seated and standing. The sign of peace, without physical contact, is permitted, or it may be omitted.

Masses and liturgies of Holy Week may take place outdoors where possible. “Parking lot” liturgies with parishioners in cars are not permitted.

Parishes may livestream the liturgies of Holy Week for their parishioners. They may not prerecord them but must livestream them at the proper time of each. The Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper takes place in the evening of Holy Thursday; Good Friday Passion of the Lord is ordinarily celebrated at about 3:00 pm on Good Friday (unless a later hour is chosen for pastoral reasons); in 2021, the Easter Vigil should not be celebrated before 8:15 pm.

The Archdiocese will inform parishes of the livestreaming of the Cathedral Basilica liturgies of Holy Week so that they may be made available to parishioners.

Parishes which do not have the capability to ensure the safety of all, including the ministers, are not obliged to celebrate the liturgies of the Easter Triduum. They may be livestreamed without the presence of the faithful, but parishioners need to be informed how to access the livestream at the proper times.

PALM SUNDAY

The commemoration of the Lord’s Entrance into Jerusalem is to be celebrated within sacred buildings; in Cathedral churches the second form given in the *Roman Missal* is to be adopted; in parish churches and in other places the third form is to be used. (Covid-19 II)

Third Form: The Simple Entrance

While the Priest proceeds to the altar, the Entrance Antiphon with its Psalm (no. 18) or another chant on the same theme is sung. Arriving at the altar, the Priest venerates it and goes to the chair. After the Sign of the Cross, he greets the people and continues the Mass in the usual way. (*Roman Missal*)

“The Third Form: Simple Entrance” does not include a gathering outside the church, the blessing of palm or the proclamation of the Gospel of the Lord’s entrance into Jerusalem. The requirement that this

liturgy occur “within sacred buildings” is meant to prevent gatherings of large crowds and/or a large procession prior to the liturgy which could expose people to contagion. As long as the “Simple Entrance” is properly celebrated, Palm Sunday liturgies may take place outside with masks, social distancing and without processions of the faithful.

Palm branches may be made available to the faithful before Mass. Palm should be placed on tables or in containers where the faithful can help themselves, without interaction, before the celebration. Ushers or greeters should **not** personally distribute palm to the faithful, and any palm that is taken must be brought home. (The blessing of the palm is derived from its presence in the liturgy).

Note:

- The church environment should reflect the day with visible use of palm branches in the sanctuary, et al.
- Clergy who process to the altar at the beginning of the liturgy must wear masks in procession and should carry palm.
- The “Simple Entrance” requires the opening rites of the Mass to be celebrated “in the usual way,” which includes the Sign of the Cross, Greeting, Penitential Act, and Collect.

HOLY THURSDAY

The washing of feet, which is already optional, is to be omitted. At the end of the Mass of the Lord’s Supper the procession is also omitted and the Blessed Sacrament is to be kept in the tabernacle. On this day, the faculty to celebrate Mass in a suitable place, without the presence of the people, is exceptionally granted to all priests. (Covid-19 II)

Priests who are unable to celebrate Mass should instead pray Vespers of the day. (Covid-19)

Holy Thursday Mass (“At the Evening Mass”) must be celebrated in the evening. This year, to avoid contagion, the option of omitting the washing of feet is mandated.

By way of exception in 2021, priests who are unable to concelebrate the evening Mass may celebrate Mass privately.

All other rubrics for “At the Evening Mass” on Holy Thursday apply (see *Roman Missal*).

Televised or livestream broadcasts should be live (never prerecorded).

GOOD FRIDAY

In the Universal Prayer, Bishops will arrange to have a special intention prepared for those who find themselves in distress, the sick, the dead, (cf. *Roman Missal*). The adoration of the Cross by kissing it shall be limited solely to the celebrant. (Covid-19 II)

Only one Cross should be offered for adoration. If because of the large number of people, it is not possible for all to approach individually, the Priest, after some of the clergy and faithful have adored, takes the Cross and, standing in the aisle before the altar, invites the people in a few words to adore

the Holy Cross and afterwards holds the Cross elevated higher for a brief time, for the faithful to adore in silence. (*Roman Missal, "Friday of the Passion of the Lord," 19*)

The following intercession should be included in the Universal Prayer:

XI. For those suffering the effects of Covid-19

Deacon or other minister:

Let us pray for all enduring the effects of the coronavirus pandemic,
the sick and the dead, those who feel lost or dismayed;
as well as those who care for the sick.

Though chastised now by affliction,
may they find relief at last through God's loving mercy.

Pray in silence.

Then the priest with hands extended sings or says:

Priest:

Almighty and merciful God,
look with compassion on our affliction;
lighten our burden and so confirm our faith,
that we may always trust without hesitation in your Fatherly providence.
Through Christ our Lord. **R:** Amen.

The "First Form" for "The Showing of the Holy Cross" (see *Roman Missal*) should be considered for use since the cross does not enter from the door of the church, eliminating a procession in the midst of the assembly.

"The Adoration of the Holy Cross" should be handled with great care. If the assembly comes forward, social distancing must be maintained and the removal of masks during the adoration is not allowed. As noted above, those venerating the cross should not kiss it, and should not make contact with the cross at all, reverencing it with a genuflection or bow.

Given that processions have been restricted, consideration should be given to the adoration of the cross according to the above rubric above from the *Roman Missal*. The cross is shown to the assembly to adore in silence without a procession (see *Roman Missal* above).

The assembly will need to be informed of the restrictions.

Priests who are unable to participate in the liturgical service of Good Friday should instead pray Evening Prayer of the day.

All other rubrics for "Friday of the Passion of the Lord" on Good Friday apply (see *Roman Missal*).

Televised or livestream broadcasts should be live (never prerecorded).

THE EASTER VIGIL

The Easter Vigil is to be celebrated only in Cathedral and parish churches. For the “Baptismal Liturgy” only the “Renewal of Baptismal Promises” is maintained (cf. *Roman Missal*) (Covid-19 II)

At “The Solemn Beginning of the Vigil or Lucernarium” the preparation and lighting of the fire is omitted, the Paschal Candle is lit, the procession is omitted and the Easter Proclamation (*Exsultet*) follows. The “Liturgy of the Word” then takes place. For the “Baptismal Liturgy” the “Renewal of Baptismal Promises” alone is necessary (cf. *Roman Missal*). The “Liturgy of the Eucharist” then follows. (Covid-19)

Those who have absolutely no possibility of uniting themselves to the Paschal Vigil celebrated in church should pray the Office of Readings for Easter Sunday. (Covid-19)

There is only one celebration of the Easter Vigil permitted in each church. The Easter Vigil is only to be celebrated in Cathedral and parish churches where it is possible to do so with the proper number of ministers and a full celebration of all of the rites (see *Roman Missal*). No Masses for Easter may be scheduled before the Easter Vigil, which cannot begin before 8:15 pm. Once the Vigil is complete, Easter Sunday Masses may be celebrated, even on Saturday night after the Vigil is complete. Parishes may wish to schedule additional Masses on Easter Sunday as needed.

Notes for the Easter Vigil:

- The assembly (wearing masks and socially distancing) gathers in the church.
- At the proper time, the lights in the church are turned off.
- The Paschal Candle, prepared privately, is lit with dignity in the darkened church.
- Clergy and ministers may have tapers lit from the Paschal Candle, but they should be distant from each other when extinguishing them.
- The Paschal Candle may be incensed
- There is no procession.
- The lights are turned on before the Easter Proclamation (*Exsultet*).
- The Easter Proclamation follows.
- The Liturgy of the Word takes place as usual.
- After the homily, only the “Renewal of Baptismal Promises” takes place without sprinkling rite. There is no Litany of the Saints or Blessing of Water. The tapers are not relit.

Christian Initiation:

- In places where baptism is taking place, RCIA, 206 and following, is celebrated. This includes the Litany of Saints and Blessing of Water. The procession to the font should take place by the most direct route. If there are multiple catechumens and sponsors, they should not all gather simultaneously at the font, but should be called forth individually with their sponsors.
- Fonts are to remain empty. Water for baptisms should be blessed in pitchers, preferably one for each catechumen.
- The anointing for Confirmation should be done with the use of a cotton swab or cotton ball so that the presider does not touch the candidate.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist follows as usual.

- It is preferable for those receiving first Communion at the Easter Vigil to receive both the Body and Blood of Christ. A separate chalice should be prepared for each communicant.

All other rubrics for “The Easter Vigil” on Holy Saturday apply (see *Roman Missal*).

Televised or livestreamed broadcasts of the Easter Vigil should be live (never prerecorded).

EASTER SUNDAY

Easter Sunday Masses may be celebrated outdoors.

The Renewal of Baptismal Promises takes place after the homily (omitting the Creed).

The sprinkling rite is omitted.

All other rubrics for Mass on Easter Sunday apply (see *Roman Missal*).

Televised or livestreamed broadcasts of Easter Sunday Masses should never be prerecorded.

CHRISTIAN INITIATION

RCIA

The Easter Vigil is the time for full initiation of the catechumens who have celebrated the Rite of Election. Parishes with catechumens who cannot attend the Vigil in 2021 should contact the Director of the RCIA in the Worship Office to consider other options.

Confirmation of Adult Baptized Catholics

For the year 2021, Cardinal Tobin has delegated all Pastors, Administrators and Chaplains to confirm adults baptized as Catholics on any Sunday (Saturday evening) other than the Easter Vigil. The delegation expires December 31, 2021. It is not necessary to receive delegation from the regional bishop during 2021.

The “Order of Confirmation” is used for the Confirmation of adults baptized as Catholics.

Reception into Full Communion

Any priest may celebrate the “Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church,” preferably on a Sunday of Easter, but not at the Easter Vigil, according to RCIA, 487, ff. Delegation to confirm is never required for the Reception into Full Communion.

Note that the Confirmation of adult Catholics cannot take place at the Easter Vigil, and the “Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church” should not take place at the Easter Vigil.

These two celebrations should be done on separate occasions, according to their particular rites (see *The Order of Confirmation* for confirming adult Catholics and *RCIA, 487* for Full Communion).

EXPRESSIONS OF POPULAR PIETY

Expressions of popular piety and processions which enrich the days of Holy Week and the Paschal Triduum can be transferred to other suitable days of the year, for example 14 and 15 September, according to the judgment of the Diocesan Bishop. (Covid-19 II)

It is up to the local pastor, administrator or chaplain to determine if devotions and expressions of popular piety can be practiced at this time. This includes visitation to churches on Holy Thursday evening; Stations of the Cross; holy hours; rosary; novenas; etc., etc., etc. In every case, the principles of masking, social distancing and sanitizing must be maintained. If these practices cannot be guaranteed or maintained, then these practices should be delayed to another time or omitted until next year.

QUESTIONS

Questions regarding these directives may be submitted by pastors, administrators and chaplains to the Office of Divine Worship via phone 973.497.4345 or email (see www.rcan.org/worship).



*Thank you for all the great ministry you and your pastoral staffs
are doing during this extraordinary time.
May Lent and Holy Week be a time of abundant blessings.*