



## **Liturgical Guidelines for Holy Week 2021 During the Coronavirus Pandemic** March 12, 2021

As we approach Holy Week and Easter celebrations, we must always be mindful that, while COVID-19 conditions have improved within our Archdiocese, we must take care to protect one another. At the present time, Federal, State, and local County guidelines are changing, but no restrictions for our Churches have been lifted. At all times, the “Updated Liturgical Guidelines During the Coronavirus Pandemic” issued on February 11, 2021 by the Archdiocese must continue to be followed.

For all liturgical celebrations, prudent decisions are to be made in order that the liturgy can be celebrated fruitfully for the faithful, while maintaining a safe and healthy environment for everyone who participates in the liturgy.

What is described below is an attempt to harmonize the rubrics of the Roman Missal, along with the decrees of the Holy See (March 19 and 25, 2020 and February 17, 2021), in light of the current circumstances.

### **Palm Sunday**

The Commemoration of the Lord’s Entrance into Jerusalem may be celebrated indoors or outdoors; the second or third form given in the Roman Missal is to be used:

- **The Second Form**

- Palms may be distributed by ushers wearing gloves by the entrance of the worship space.
- The faithful may take their places in the church or outdoor worship space holding branches.
- Only the priest and the necessary ministers go up to a place in the church (worship space) outside the sanctuary where most of the faithful can still see them.
- The ceremony takes place as described: blessing of branches and the proclamation of the Gospel of the Lord’s entrance into Jerusalem.
- After the Gospel, the priest processes with the ministers to the sanctuary.
- After venerating the altar, the priest prays the Collect.

- **The Third Form**

- The priest goes to the altar, venerates the altar, and goes to his chair. He makes the sign of the cross, greets the people, and Mass continues in the usual way.
- This form does not include the Gospel of Palm Sunday or the blessing of palms, but does include the act of penitence before the Collect.
- If the pastor chooses this entrance but still wishes to distribute palms to the faithful, palms should be blessed outside of Mass, either before or after, using the prayer for the blessing of palms as found in the *Roman Missal* for Palm Sunday (6).

- If no palms will be distributed, it is not necessary to bless palms.
  - Palms are distributed by ushers wearing gloves as the faithful exit the worship space.
- For parishes who have “drive-in” style outdoor Masses, palms may be distributed at the end of Mass.
- The shorter form of the reading of the Passion of the Lord may be used.
- The homily should be brief, or a period of silence may also be observed (cf. *Roman Missal: Palm Sunday 22*).

## Thursday of the Lord's Supper (Holy Thursday)

For the celebration of the Mass of the Lord's Supper, the washing of feet, which is already optional, shall be omitted.

- **Indoor Worship**

- Ideally, the Mass of the Lord's Supper begins with the tabernacle empty (cf. *Roman Missal: Mass of the Lord's Supper* 5).
- At the end of the Mass of the Lord's Supper, the procession shall be omitted, and the Blessed Sacrament shall be kept in the tabernacle.
- After the distribution of Communion, the Blessed Sacrament shall be placed on the altar.
- At the conclusion of the Prayer after Communion the priest shall place the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle.
- A period of silent adoration shall follow.
- Then the priest and ministers genuflect to the tabernacle and return to the sacristy.
- There is no blessing.

- **Outdoor worship**

- After the distribution of Communion, the Blessed Sacrament shall be placed on the altar.
- At the conclusion of the Prayer after Communion, a period of silent adoration shall follow.
- Then, only the priest and the necessary ministers shall process with the Blessed Sacrament to the church and place the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle.
- There is no blessing.

## Friday of the Passion of the Lord (Good Friday)

The following are to be observed in the celebration of the Friday of the Passion of the Lord.

- A special intercession should be included as the 11th of the Solemn Intercessions:

**Let us pray also for all those who suffer the consequences of the current pandemic, that God the Father may grant health to the sick, strength to those who care for them, comfort to families and salvation to all the victims who have died.**

*Prayer in silence. Then the Priest says:*

**Almighty ever-living God, only support of our human weakness, look with compassion upon the sorrowful condition of your children who suffer because of this pandemic; relieve the pain of the sick, give strength to those who care for them, welcome into your peace those who have died and, throughout this time of tribulation, grant that we may all find comfort in your merciful love. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

- The adoration of the Cross by kissing it shall be limited solely to the priest. After the priest has adored the Cross, he may hold “the Cross elevated higher for a brief time, for the faithful to adore it in silence” (*Roman Missal: Good Friday 19*).
- Alternatively, ministers may hold the Cross at the front of the sanctuary and the faithful may process forward single file, observing social distance and mask wearing, and adore the Cross by genuflecting or bowing **(without touching or kissing it)**.
- The Cross can remain before the altar at the conclusion of the liturgy so that the faithful may continue to pray and meditate upon it (cf. *Roman Missal: Good Friday 33*).
- The Communion rite takes place as usual: the altar is covered with cloth and candles, and then the Blessed Sacrament is carried to the altar from its place of reservation. Following communion, the Blessed Sacrament is returned to the tabernacle or its previous place of reservation (cf. *Roman Missal: Good Friday 29*).
- Following the liturgy, the altar candles are removed, and the altar is stripped; the Cross remains in place for a time.
- It is important to note that “this liturgy by its very nature may not, however, be celebrated in the absence of a Priest” (*Roman Missal: Good Friday 4*). In other words, only a priest may lead the service.

## Easter Vigil in the Holy Night (Easter Vigil)

### First Part: The Solemn Beginning of the Vigil (The Blessing of the Fire and Preparation of the Candle)

- **Option A**
  - The Easter Vigil begins, according to custom, with the tabernacle empty. The Blessed Sacrament which remains from Mass on Holy Thursday (and the Celebration of the Lord's Passion on Friday) is generally reserved outside the main body of the church, usually in the sacristy, where a light can burn next to it (cf. *Roman Missal: Good Friday 29*).
  - The priest begins the Vigil in the usual way with greeting, blessing of fire, and preparation of the candle (cf. *Roman Missal: Easter Vigil in the Holy Night 8-14*). Only the priests and the required ministers take part in this rite. The rest of the faithful must be already present in their respective sitting places, including those to be baptized.
  
- **Option B**
  - The preparation and blessing of fire may be omitted depending on the worship setting and/or pastoral circumstances. Nevertheless, the rest of the rubrics for the beginning of the *lucernarium* remain.
  - Without the blessing of the fire and the lighting of the Easter candle from that fire, and the procession from the fire into the church, the Vigil can begin once all the ministers have entered the sanctuary in silence and the celebrant has venerated the altar and is standing at the chair. There shall be no entrance chant for the Easter Vigil.
  - Upon arriving at his chair, the book bearer approaches, as does a server holding the Easter candle and another server holding a lit taper from which the celebrant will eventually light the Easter candle (it is probably best for this taper to be lit discretely out of sight and brought to the priest celebrant).
  - Once all are standing in their places, which should be at least six feet apart from one another, perhaps all the lights in the church are extinguished, except for one light at the chair. Otherwise, at least some of the lights of the church will need to remain on so that the priest celebrant can read from the missal the opening portions of the *lucernarium*.
  - The celebrant begins with the sign of the cross, the greeting, and the instruction, "Dear brethren," as indicated in the *Roman Missal* (cf. Easter Vigil 9). Omitting the blessing of the fire, and therefore the preparation of incense (the charcoals are lit from the blessed fire), he proceeds directly to prepare the candle as indicated in the *Roman Missal* and lights it using the formula there (perhaps the priest concludes the formula with the sign of the cross over the flame, saying nothing, to compensate for the absent blessing of the fire) (cf. *Roman Missal: Easter Vigil 11-12, 14*). The server extinguishes the taper, and the celebrant lights his candle from the Easter candle.

- For outdoor Mass only, those next to the celebrant also light their candles and go to bring the light to the rest of the faithful.
- Since all would need to remove their masks and exhale forcefully to extinguish them, the use of small lit candles by the faithful is strongly discouraged both during the *lucernarium* and the Renewal of Baptismal Promises.
- Should small candles be offered to the faithful, it would be prudent to acknowledge the circumstances ahead of time. Extra distance of at least twelve feet must be established between all people blowing out candles.

### The Easter Proclamation

- Once all have their candles lit (see above), the deacon asks for the celebrant's blessing to announce the Easter proclamation (cf. *Roman Missal: Easter Vigil 18*). He, or another minister in his absence, carries the Easter candle from the priest's chair to its stand and places it there (as an alternative, it may be more convenient for the celebrant to begin the Vigil, prepare the candle, and light it while standing next to its stand, either near the ambo or in the middle of the sanctuary, before arriving at the chair).
- In the absence of a deacon, the celebrant, a concelebrant, or a cantor may sing the proclamation; all "Updated Guidelines" issued February 11 for singing or chanting must be followed. These do not request the celebrant's blessing beforehand. Depending on the circumstances, it may not be possible to sing the entire *Exsultet*, even in the short form.
- The person charged with this ministry could sing at least the initial portion of the *Exsultet*, "Exult, let them exult, the hosts of heaven." In extreme necessity, perhaps a deacon or priest could sing at least the dialogues which follow the initial portion, "The Lord be with you..." if the cleric is unable to sing absolutely nothing else (these dialogues are not sung by a lay cantor).
- The lights of the church are turned on prior to the beginning of the Exultet (cf. *Roman Missal: Easter Vigil 17*).
- Congregational singing or chanting is not permitted indoors or outdoors.
- For outdoor worship, after the *Exsultet*, all extinguish their candles (cf. *Roman Missal: Easter Vigil 22*).

### Second Part: The Liturgy of the Word

- The reading of Exodus 14 with its response is always required, but a choice can be made among the other Old Testament readings.
- At least three readings from the Old Testament, representing both the Law and the prophets (Exodus 14 included), must be read (cf. *Roman Missal: Easter Vigil 21*).
- Apart from the Exodus reading, a decision can be made whether to include some of the psalm responses which follow the readings (cf. *Roman Missal: Easter Vigil, 23*). These can be read straight through without their intervening response (*General Instruction on the Roman Missal (GIRM) 61*). In some cases, perhaps the response alone can be sung by the cantor while the verses are recited.
- At the Gloria, the bells of the church are rung, and the altar candles are lit from the Easter candle.

- After the reading of the Epistle, the Alleluia at least should be sung by the Cantor, even if the verses to psalm 118 need to be recited. The celebrant or, if necessary, another minister may intone the Alleluia. Again, all protocols for singing or chanting must be followed, and singing or chanting by the congregation is not allowed.
- Candles are not carried at the Gospel, but the use of incense is possible if there are sufficient servers. Incense might also be used at the other usual points of Mass, depending on the servers available.

### **Third Part: Baptismal Liturgy**

- After the Homily, the Baptismal liturgy begins.
  - The Litany is sung by the Cantor (outdoor worship) or recited (indoor worship). The litany may be sung or chanted, but the faithful must be reminded that there is no congregational singing.
  - There is no lowering of paschal candle into the water during the blessing of Baptismal water.
  - Baptism should be done by pouring, not immersion, and the water used for baptizing should afterward be given to the ground (via the sacrarium or otherwise).
  - **Water should not be “re-used” for subsequent baptisms.**
  - The sprinkling with holy water is discouraged.
  - Holy water fonts at the entrances of the church and baptismal fonts are to remain empty.
- For health safety, an instrument (e.g., cotton swab) is to be used for Confirmation. Those instruments should be burned after Mass.
- For parishes celebrating Easter Vigil without the Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation
  - After the homily, the celebration of the sacraments of initiation is deferred or omitted.
  - “If no one is to be baptized and the font is not be blessed, the Litany is omitted, and the Blessing of Water (54) takes place at once” (*Roman Missal: The Easter Vigil* 42).
  - The Blessing of water is to be done if there is to be a sprinkling rite, otherwise it is omitted.
  - The sprinkling with holy water is discouraged. If sprinkling of holy water is to take place, the congregation should be advised in advance so that anyone not wishing to participate in this may be seated in a designated location where they will not be sprinkled.
- The Congregation for Divine Worship, in its decree of March 19, 2020, indicated that the only portion of the baptismal liturgy at the Easter Vigil that remains is the renewal of baptismal promises as indicated in the *Roman Missal* at no. 55. The celebrant leads the renewal of baptismal promises from the chair. All hold lit candles in their hands (outdoor worship only). Holding lit candles during the Renewal of Baptismal Promises may also be omitted for outdoor worship.

### **Fourth Part: The Liturgy of the Eucharist**

- The priest goes to the altar and begins the Liturgy of the Eucharist in the usual way.
- Mass concludes as indicated in the *Missal*.
- All depart in the usual way.

## Special Notes on Christian Initiation – Adults and Children

- In accord with the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*, no. 34, Archbishop José H. Gomez has decided that the rites of Christian Initiation may be celebrated for pastoral reasons outside the Easter Vigil for 2021.
- The Elect may be baptized at any Mass, preferably on Sunday. The full initiation of the Elect could take place at the Vigil of Pentecost (May 22) or at any other time.
- Non-Catholic Christians may also be received into full communion at any Mass, or outside of Mass following the approved rites. As always, pastors should seek faculties to confirm Catholic adults by writing to their Regional Bishop.
- Please remember that candidates for Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church may be received during Mass at any point during the year. This rite would ideally take place within Mass (cf. *RCIA*, no. 475). There is no reason to delay Reception into Full Communion if the candidate is ready.