

## **Guidance for Holy Week and Easter 2021**

Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Diocese of Arlington

1. For the liturgies of Holy Week and Easter, all options provided in *The Roman Missal* are available. The two decrees issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments for Holy Week and Easter in 2020 and all associated diocesan guidelines for Holy Week and Easter in 2020 applied only for 2020 and do not apply for 2021.
2. The Office of Divine Worship will provide the usual annual reminders about Holy Week and Easter liturgies (e.g., on celebration of sacraments, liturgical music, decoration of sacred space, etc.) in a separate document. What follows are specific responses to circumstances arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. The usual COVID-19 protocols for the celebration of Mass should be followed in all liturgies—for example, sanitizing hands, wearing face coverings, remaining socially distanced (six feet of separation between households)—with due regard for the reverent enactment of the rites and texts.
4. Music in the liturgy, including choirs and instrumentalists, is left to the prudential judgment of the local pastor. If a choir ministers, members of the choir are to stand at least ten feet apart. Regarding instrumentalists, non-wind instruments are preferable to wind instruments (excepting the organ).
5. Ministers who assist with preparing for liturgies, such as sacristans and others who assist with sacred spaces, should follow the usual COVID-19 protocols, such as wearing masks, sanitizing hands frequently, and observing social distancing.

### **Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord**

6. The blessing and distribution of palms is permitted. Basic COVID-19 protocols—such as sanitizing hands and wearing face coverings—should be followed during the preparing and distributing palms. The manner of preparation and distribution is left to the prudential judgment of the local pastor.
7. Clean and fresh water for blessing palms should be prepared for each Palm Sunday liturgy. Palms are blessed according to the rubrics of *The Roman Missal*, and the blessing of palms takes place at the specified ritual moment. Palms should not be blessed outside of Palm Sunday liturgies. If a local pastor discerns a true and specific pastoral need to bless and distribute palms outside of Mass, he should contact the Vicar General and the Office of Divine Worship for guidance.
8. The “Commemoration of the Lord’s Entrance into Jerusalem” may be celebrated in any of the three forms provided in *The Roman Missal* according to the rubrics provided for their celebration. Those processing should maintain six feet of separation between households.

## **Thursday of the Lord's Supper, at the Evening Mass**

9. *The Roman Missal* allows the local Ordinary to permit more than one Mass to be celebrated this evening in the case of genuine necessity. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, for Holy Thursday 2021 Bishop Burbidge directs that local pastors who discern a need to celebrate more than one Mass request this permission from the Vicar General. This permission, when granted on a case-by-case basis, applies only to April 1, 2021. Masses are to begin no earlier than 4:00 p.m.

10. The Washing of Feet is an optional rite. It may be celebrated or not celebrated at the discretion of the local pastor. If the Washing of Feet is celebrated, only the principal celebrant pours the water for the washing. Before and after the washing, the priest thoroughly sanitizes his hands. Additional safety precautions may be taken as the local pastor deems fit: for example, sanitizing hands between each washing. As usual, clean water and towels are prepared for each individual.

11. The Transfer of the Most Blessed Sacrament should take place with the addition of the usual COVID-19 protocols: for example, maintaining social distancing in processions and in the place of reposition. It may be necessary for ministers to direct only a portion of those gathered for Mass to enter the place of reposition, asking others to remain in prayer in the main church or another location until they are able to enter and pray safely before the Blessed Sacrament. The details of such arrangements are left to the prudential judgment of the local pastor.

12. Vigil prayer should be coordinated in accordance with basic COVID-19 protocols. The place of reposition should be prepared in a well-ventilated space that is large enough to allow for at least a few adorers to gather while maintaining social distancing. Consideration should be given to how the ventilation capabilities of the space relate to the number of adorers present at any given time and the overall length of adoration. The usual sanitizing protocols should be followed in the place of reposition.

## **Friday of the Passion of the Lord**

13. For the Solemn Intercessions, Bishop Burbidge directs that the same intercession "For an end to the pandemic" offered in 2020 as the final intercession be prayed again in 2021 as the final intercession.

### **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 prays:**

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.

14. The Showing of the Holy Cross may be celebrated in either of the two forms provided in *The Roman Missal*.

15. For Adoration of the Holy Cross on Good Friday 2021, Bishop Burbidge directs that the clergy, the lay ministers, and the faithful show reverence to the Cross by a genuflection or, for those who are physically unable to genuflect, a bow. Bishop Burbidge also directs that kissing the Cross, which is not required by *The Roman Missal*, not take place in 2021. These two directives apply only for April 2, 2021.

16. For Adoration of the Holy Cross, the rubrics of *The Roman Missal* require that “only one Cross should be offered for adoration.”

17. The rubrics of *The Roman Missal* state, “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 middle 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 it in silence.” During the current pandemic, consideration should also be given to how the number of those gathered may or may not prolong the overall time spent in a public gathering. When this manner of celebration is observed, at least some lay faithful are to approach individually to adore the Cross before all adore together in silence.

18. Holy Communion is to be celebrated in accordance with the rubrics of *The Roman Missal* at the usual ritual moment within the liturgy of the Passion of the Lord. According to rubric no. 2 for Good Friday, “Holy Communion is distributed to the faithful only within the celebration of the Lord’s Passion; but it may be brought at any hour of the day to the sick who cannot participate in this celebration.” Other than taking Communion to the sick or homebound, it is not permitted to celebrate another Communion liturgy, nor is it permitted to distribute Communion following the recession of the ministers for the liturgy of the Lord’s Passion.

### **Easter Vigil in the Holy Night**

19. In 2021, the Easter Vigil begins no earlier than 8:30 p.m. on Saturday, April 3, 2021.

20. Distributing and lighting candles for all members of the assembly is permitted. Basic COVID-19 protocols—such as sanitizing hands and wearing face coverings—should be followed when preparing and distributing candles. The manner of preparation and distribution is left to the

prudential judgment of the local pastor. To carry out the lighting during the liturgy, it is permissible for different households to stand momentarily closer than six feet because face coverings are worn and the action is brief.

21. The Solemn Beginning of the Vigil is to be celebrated as indicated in *The Roman Missal*. When the local pastor discerns that, because of the COVID-19 pandemic or other pastoral reasons, a fire cannot be lit outside the church, the blessing of fire is adapted as indicated in no. 13 of the rubrics for the Easter Vigil: “When the people are gathered in the church as on other occasions, the Priest comes to the door of the church, along with the ministers carrying the paschal candle. The people, insofar as is possible, turn to face the Priest. The greeting and address take place as in no. 9 above [i.e., Sign of the Cross, greeting in the usual manner, instruction “Dear brethren...”]; then the fire [burning on a candle or taper] is blessed and the [paschal] candle is prepared, as above in nos. 10-12 [i.e. blessing ‘O God...’, ‘Christ yesterday...’, and ‘By his holy...’].”

22. As noted above, music in the liturgy is left to the prudential judgment of the local pastor. Therefore, the texts of the Easter Vigil may be sung; examples from the Solemn Beginning include “The Light of Christ” with its response, the *Exsultet*, and the *Gloria*.

23. The Sacraments of Initiation may take place according to the prudential judgment of the local pastor. It is to be noted that Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist of unbaptized adults may take place at the Easter Vigil or on other days, most fittingly on the Sundays of Easter Time. The celebration of Reception into Full Communion for baptized non-Catholic Christians may also fittingly take place on other days, especially the Sundays of Easter Time. Confirmation for uncatechized adult Catholics, which is ordinarily celebrated by the Bishop of Arlington on Pentecost Sunday, has been delegated to local pastors in 2021; such celebrations are also fitting on the Sundays of Easter Time and especially on Pentecost Sunday. The particular days of celebration are left to the prudential judgment of the local pastor.

24. For Baptisms, fresh water should be poured over each elect. At the same time, the important symbolism of “one font” should be maintained insofar as possible. For example, the “one font” can be balanced with the need to pour clean water over each elect by first blessing the water in the one font, then drawing enough water for all Baptisms (with separate vessels for each elect or a single large vessel), next drawing water for the aspersorium (holy water bucket, for the Renewal of Promises), and finally beginning the Baptisms. In this way, no water is drawn from the font after the first Baptism has been celebrated. After the Vigil, a smaller font could be emptied and sanitized, the blessed water from the aspersorium returned to the clean font, and additional fresh water added as needed. Larger fonts could be treated as usual, with sufficient time for the treatment to be effective.

25. For Confirmation, an instrument may be used for the anointing, if the local pastor discerns this to be necessary.

26. For the Renewal of Baptismal Promises, the sprinkling takes place with water blessed earlier in the liturgy, either drawn from the font (before Baptisms begin) or blessed in accordance with rubric no. 54 of the Easter Vigil (when no person is to be baptized and the font is not blessed). As noted above, it may be prudent to wait until after the Easter Vigil liturgy to return the blessed

water in the aspersorium to the baptismal font or even to set aside the blessed water in the aspersorium for the sprinkling that may be celebrated in Easter Sunday Masses.

**Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord, At the Mass during the Day**

27. When the Renewal of Baptismal Promises takes place after the homily, the sprinkling takes place with water blessed at the Easter Vigil. If the recommendations above are followed, the water blessed at the Easter Vigil can be carefully kept for this sprinkling on Easter Sunday.