

## INTRODUCTION

### PASTORAL PRACTICES DURING THE PANDEMIC

Despite the good news of effective vaccines and the efforts of medical personnel and civil leaders, the coronavirus pandemic continues to rage. At this writing, there have been one hundred million reported cases worldwide and over 2,500,000 deaths. In the United States alone, we have lost over 415,000 loved ones. Certainly, the health and safety of our parishioners and attentiveness to the common good continues to dominate our pastoral practices and our liturgical planning.

At this writing, the USCCB has received no directives from the Vatican regarding Holy Week and the Triduum. Last year, the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments provided adaptations to the rites since churches were shuttered and ministers would have been celebrating the rites without an assembly. We await any directives.

In the meantime, we offer the following general guidelines for your consideration. These are not meant to be exhaustive. They are not legislative. Your Bishop will certainly produce guidelines for your (arch)diocese. As we become aware of these, we will post sample diocesan guidelines on the FDLC website: [www.fdlc.org/covid](http://www.fdlc.org/covid).

#### **ASH WEDNESDAY**

The Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments issued a directive on January 12 indicating the method for the distribution of ashes. The formula should be said once, over the entire assembly; both the minister and penitent should be masked; and the ashes should be sprinkled on top of a bowed head. This monastic tradition is not known to many in the United States, so some catechesis may be necessary.

While a time-honored tradition, the reception and wearing of ashes is not obligatory on Ash Wednesday.

#### **RCIA: RITES DURING THE PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT**

While recent surveys have indicated that the number of catechumens has decreased in most dioceses this past year, it is still vitally important to celebrate the rites with dignity and decorum. In many dioceses, the Bishop has delegated the pastor to celebrate the Rite of Election in the parish, since large gatherings are prohibited in most cities. For information about this rite, you may wish to consult the archived version of a recent FDLC webinar. It may be found at [www.fdlc.org/formation](http://www.fdlc.org/formation).

Other rites for the elect – such as the Scrutinies and the Presentations --should be celebrated with social distancing guidelines in mind. Consider how the elect and their godparents might be spaced out in your worship space. If there are a large number of the elect, consider celebrating the rites at several Masses. If these Masses are live-streamed, consider posting the worship aid online, so that families watching at home may participate more fully. (Of course, observe all copyright protocols.)

We are currently in Year B of the Lectionary cycle of readings, but Year A readings may be used. (See the *Lectionary for Mass*, nos. 744-747.)

Please see preparation sheets for these rites elsewhere in the booklet.

Rites for baptized candidates, including the Call to Continuing Conversion (RCIA 446-458) and the Penitential Rite (RCIA 459-472) are optional. The Rite of Reception into Full Communion (RCIA 473-498) may be celebrated whenever the candidate is deemed ready.

## **THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE**

Especially during the penitential season of Lent, Catholics are encouraged to receive the sacrament of Penance. We suggest that you make use of rooms at your parish which can permit social distancing and still ensure the privacy of the confessional (e.g. multiple spaces or meeting rooms). The confessor and penitent should be masked. If aids are used in the confessional, consider using disposable pamphlets which the penitents may take with them when they leave.

Included in this preparation aid, as usual, is a presider's text for a communal penance service. Given civil restrictions, it will rarely be used in its entirety. Consider offering parts of it as at-home preparation before parishioners come to the parish for individual confessions.

## **LITURGY AND CATECHESIS**

Since many of our parishioners will not be able to participate in the liturgies of Lent, Holy Week, and the Easter Season, what can you do to enable the Domestic Church to still celebrate these mysteries? What resources have you prepared for children and adults? Are they accessible on the parish website or are they mailed to homes? How can liturgists, musicians, catechists and school teachers collaborate in this effort?

## **PALM SUNDAY**

It is not advisable to distribute palms on Palm Sunday given the possibility of spreading the virus. Even individually-packed palms can risk contamination.

Since this practice is very important to some cultures, some have considered alternative methods of distribution. Perhaps bless all the palms in baskets in the sanctuary, then distribute them *after* Mass, with gloved and masked volunteers distributing them. Please consult your local Office of Worship.

## **CHRISM MASS**

Again, civil restrictions may limit the number of people who may participate in the Chrism Mass again this year. Perhaps vicars or a representative number of priests, deacons, and faithful may be present. Consider how the sacred oils will be safely bottled and distributed.

Traditionally, the sacred oils are received at the parish on Holy Thursday at the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper. The text for the reception of the Holy Oils is found elsewhere in this preparation aid.

## **THE SACRED PASCHAL TRIDUUM**

As noted by the CDWDS last year, the liturgies of the Triduum should not be taped, but live-streamed at their liturgically-appointed times.

For full directives on the proper celebration of the Triduum, please see *Paschale Solemnitatis*, the *Roman Missal*, and the *Roman Ritual* (RCIA).

The following paragraphs do not intend to cover all rubrics and rituals for the Triduum, but simply highlight some considerations for practices during the pandemic. Please see preparation sheets provided elsewhere in this booklet.

## **THURSDAY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER AT THE EVENING MASS**

The sacred oils, blessed and consecrated by the Bishop at the Chrism Mass, may be presented to the parish in a variety of ways. We recommend presenting all three of them before Mass begins with a simple procession. The vessels may be placed on a cloth-covered table in the sanctuary or directly into the ambry.

The Washing of Feet is an optional ritual. If it is performed, please plan for social distancing. Those chosen should be representative of the parish; the rubrics do allow for a number less than twelve.

The processions to the altar of repose should be spaced out widely. Similarly, the place of reservation should be appropriately spaced so as to avoid overcrowding.

## **FRIDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD: GOOD FRIDAY**

Take advantage of the variety of options for the unveiling of the Cross. Choose the one that suits your worship space and the minsters' proximity to the assembly.

Only one Cross should be offered for adoration. During the pandemic, it might be wise to use the option of simply showing the Cross to the faithful – “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 in silence” (*Roman Missal*, Good Friday, 19)

## **EASTER SUNDAY OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD: THE EASTER VIGIL IN THE HOLY NIGHT**

“The entire celebration of the Easter Vigil takes place at night. It should not begin before nightfall; it should end before daybreak on Sunday. This rule is to be taken according to its strictest sense. Reprehensible are those abuses and practices that have crept into many places in violation of this ruling, whereby the Easter Vigil is celebrated at the same time of day that it is customary to celebrate anticipated Sunday Masses” (*Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts*, no. 78. Congregation for Divine Worship, January 16, 1988, quoting *The Roman Missal*).

“According to a most ancient tradition, this night is one of vigil for the Lord, and the Vigil celebrated during it, to commemorate that holy night when the Lord rose from the dead, is regarded as the mother of all holy vigils. For in that night, the Church keeps vigil, waiting for the resurrection of the Lord, and celebrates the sacraments of Christian initiation” (*Paschale Solemnitatis*, no. 77; quoting Exodus 12:42; St. Augustine, Sermon 219; and the *Ceremonial of Bishops*).

The Solemn Beginning of the Vigil or Lucernarium -- “The first part consists of symbolic acts and gestures, which require that they be performed in all their fullness and nobility, so that their meaning, as explained by the introductory words of the celebrant and the liturgical prayers, may be truly understood by the faithful.

In so far as possible, a suitable place should be prepared outside the church for the blessing of the new fire, whose flames should be such that they genuinely dispel the darkness and light up the night.

The paschal candle should be prepared, which for effective symbolism must be made of wax, never be artificial, be renewed each year, be only one in number, and be of sufficiently large size so that it may evoke the truth that Christ is the light of the world. It is blessed with the signs and words prescribed in the Missal or by the Conference of Bishops” (*Paschale Solemnitatis*, 88).

Baptism – “Baptism by immersion is the fuller and more expressive sign of the sacrament and therefore, is preferred” (National Statutes 17, CIGI 22). This year, in light of the pandemic, consider the practice of infusion (pouring) rather than immersion baptism. Certainly, we will want to use the symbols of water and oil in their fullness.

Confirmation – The CDWDS has already determined that the anointing with Chrism may take place with an instrument (e.g. a Q-tip for each confirmand). The priest who baptizes [and receives into full communion] receives from the law itself the faculty to confirm and is obliged to use it (canon 885.2).

Eucharist – With both adults and children of catechetical age, all three sacraments of initiation are to be administered at a single liturgy (National Statutes 14, Canon 842.2). In light of the pandemic and temporary restrictions regarding the shared cup, the reception of Holy Communion may have to be under the form of the host alone. Consult your Office of Worship for local directives.

## **EASTER SUNDAY OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD: MASS DURING THE DAY**

Renewal of Baptismal Promises -- The assembly renews their baptismal promises on Easter Vigil and on Easter Sunday. A sprinkling rite may follow this recitation. Consider your own worship space and the safest path for the celebrant to take.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The English translation of Psalm Responses, Gospel Verses from *Lectionary for Mass* © 1969, 1981, 1997, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation (ICEL); excerpts from the English translation of the *Rite of Penance* © 1974, ICEL; excerpts from the English translation of the Roman Missal © 2010, ICEL. Excerpts from the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults © 1985, ICEL. All rights reserved.

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