

To: All Clergy  
From: Office of Worship, Very Reverend Matthew Kujawinski, VF  
Date: January 11, 2021  
Re: Update on COVID-19 impact on planning for liturgies

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The COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic continues to be a very fluid and rapidly changing situation. The following are special directions for upcoming celebrations in light of COVID-19. As the situation progresses, they may need further revision.

**The Saint Blaise Blessing of Throats:** Bishop Persico directs the blessing be given once, over the entire congregation. If a parishioner, however, should request an individual blessing after Mass, a six-foot distance should be maintained, both the minister and parishioner must wear a mask, and the candles should not be touched to any person receiving the blessing.

**Distribution of Ashes on Ash Wednesday:** Because of the impossibility of sanitizing one's thumb between each person, Bishop Persico directs that those who wish to receive the sacramental of blessed ashes receive them using the practice common in many parts of the world of sprinkling ash on the crown of the head. This avoids any physical contact, but also means that you may need a larger amount of ash than usual. Some explanation of the practice to the faithful may be necessary.

**The Rite of Election:** In order not to gather groups of people from different communities, Bishop Persico will delegate pastors to celebrate the Rite of Election in their parishes on or around the First Sunday of Lent. Further information and ritual instruction will be forthcoming from the Office of Worship and the Office of Faith Formation. Pastors and parish staffs may be interested in a webinar being offered by the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions on January 19 at 2 pm. This webinar is meant to assist those who have not had to prepare and celebrate the Rite of Election before. The history of the Rite will be discussed as well as its structure and practical suggestions for celebrating the Rite in the parish. Registration can be found at: [www.fdlc.org/formation](http://www.fdlc.org/formation).

**Parishes with Confirmations scheduled during Lent:** The Office of Worship will be contacting these parishes individually in the next few weeks to discuss some options for the celebration of Confirmation.

**The Blessing and Distribution of Palms on Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion:** Bishop Persico directs that palms should not be passed out beforehand, but instead should be distributed at the end of Mass. Palms are to be blessed at Mass using the whole rite as found in the missal (nos. 5-7 under Palm Sunday). At the end of Mass, palms can

be distributed using either of two methods chosen at the pastor's discretion: 1) Designated individuals wearing gloves can hand blessed palms to parishioners as they exit the church, or 2) People can be instructed to help themselves to the blessed palms after Mass and at other convenient times. They should be encouraged to sanitize their hands before approaching the palms.

**The Chrism Mass:** Bishop Persico desires to be with the priests during this continued time of pandemic challenge. Therefore, he has decided to hold the Chrism Mass on the Monday of Holy Week, March 29, at St. Peter Cathedral at 1 pm. This Mass will be live streamed. Due to COVID-19 restrictions currently in place, we are envisioning at this time that only the priests of the diocese will be invited to participate if they feel comfortable doing so. A box lunch will be provided afterwards while the oils are prepared for distribution. More information will be forthcoming from the Chancery.

### **The Paschal Triduum**

At this time, we expect to be able to celebrate these most sacred days with a congregation using the entirety of the rites, but with necessary precautions put in place. We will need to pay close attention to some of the logistics of how to conduct the rites. We are keeping a close eye on how the situation with COVID-19 develops, and we will send out detailed instructions concerning the rites of the Triduum as Lent gets underway.