

To: All Clergy
From: Office for Divine Worship, Very Reverend Matthew J Kujawinski, VF
Date: February 25, 2022
Re: COVID-19 directives for Lent and Holy Week, 2022

The COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic continues to require consideration when preparing celebration of the sacraments and other events. The following directives have been reviewed by the Presbyteral Council and approved by Bishop Persico. If they need further revision as the situation progresses, it will be communicated to parishes closer to the date.

DISTRIBUTION OF ASHES ON ASH WEDNESDAY: Ashes may be distributed employing the usual methods (i.e., on the forehead), with the precaution that the minister distributing ashes must be vaccinated and wear a mask – utilizing the same procedure as in the distribution of communion.

BLESSING AND DISTRIBUTION OF PALMS ON PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION: All of the rites for Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion, including the blessing and distribution of palms, should return to the normal method described in the Missal, with the precaution that if individuals help with the distribution of palms, they must be vaccinated and wear a mask.

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 as prescribed with the following adjustments:

A. Thursday of Holy Week, Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper:

Modifications involve the foot washing, as follows:

The foot washing may be held, in which case all participants (clergy, servers and laity) must wear a mask.

B. Friday of the Passion of the Lord:

Modifications involve the additional intercessions and the veneration of the cross, as follows:

I. The Solemn Intercessions

There is an additional intercession in regard to COVID-19, which effectively becomes no. 11. The chant notations may be acquired by contacting the Office for Divine Worship. The prayer for victims of abuse is no longer required.

XI. For an end to the pandemic:

Let us pray, dearly beloved, for a swift end to the corona virus 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 says:

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

II. *The Adoration of the Holy Cross*

Once the showing of the cross has taken place, the people adore the cross in one of two ways:

1. The minister holds the cross aloft for a time allowing the people to venerate the cross from their place in the pews.
2. The people may process forward to venerate the cross with a bow or a genuflection but not by touching or kissing the cross.

Once the veneration is complete, the cross is placed between two candles. Following the Service of the Lord's Passion, the cross is left in church between two candles for veneration but should be arranged so it cannot be touched.

C. Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord:

I. The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night

Modifications include the celebration of baptism and distribution of holy water.

The Baptismal Liturgy:

- 1) After having blessed the water in the font, but prior to the actual celebration of baptism, use a suitable container to draw enough blessed water from the font to be poured over each person to be baptized.
- 2) Also draw out enough blessed water – in another container if necessary—to be used for sprinkling during the renewal of baptismal promises at the Vigil and on Easter Sunday morning.
- 3) With enough water set aside to pour for baptisms and to use for sprinkling at the Vigil and on Easter morning, the priest and deacon and ministers can then proceed with the baptismal liturgy.
- 4) During this year, baptisms are not to be done by immersion.

II. *At the Mass During the Day*

Everything may proceed as usual.

OTHER NOTES:

- There are to be no open vessels of water. Pastors are encouraged to make the Easter Water available to their parishioners using closed holy water bottles. These bottles can be prepared ahead of time, and the water inside them can be blessed at the Easter Vigil together with the water in the font. No separate blessing would be required.
- After the end of the last Mass on Easter Sunday, the font should be emptied and sanitized. Pour the blessed water into the ground or down the sacrarium. Do not save the blessed water from the font.