

To: All Clergy
From: Office for Divine Worship, Very Reverend Matthew J Kujawinski, VF
Date: March 18, 2022
Re: Revised COVID-19 directives for Lent and Holy Week, 2022

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to require consideration when preparing celebration of the sacraments and other events. The following directives have been revised and approved by Bishop Persico. These replace any previous liturgical directives.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Masks are no longer required at this time. The requirements that all ministers distributing Holy Communion must be vaccinated and use hand-sanitizer before distributing remain in place. These will continue to be evaluated as time goes on.

BLESSING AND DISTRIBUTION OF PALMS ON PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION: All 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.

THE PASCHAL TRIDUUM

At this time, these rites may be celebrated with a congregation using the entirety of the rites described in the Missal, with the following adjustments:

A. 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 regarding 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 henceforth omitted from the Good Friday intercessions.

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 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.

B. 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.

Effective from the conclusion of the Easter Vigil onward, the use of holy water in fonts is once again permitted in the Diocese of Erie. In light of this fact, please note the following adaptations:

The Blessing of Water:

In the Roman liturgy, blessed salt is traditionally added to newly blessed water; this remains an option for Sundays as seen in Appendix II of the Roman Missal, no. 3. Especially in light of COVID-19, we recommend the use of this custom.

If any of the water at the Easter Vigil will be drawn for use in the holy water fonts, we recommend the addition of blessed salt to the holy water before placing it in the fonts. This can be done after Mass. Other than salt, nothing else (e.g., bleach, algae killer, etc.) is to be added to the holy water.

The blessing of salt, which can be done beforehand, is found in Appendix II of the Roman Missal #3:

We humbly ask you, almighty God be pleased in your faithful love to bless + this salt you have created, for it was you who commanded the prophet Elisha to cast salt into water, that impure water might be purified. Grant, O Lord, we pray, that, wherever this mixture of water and salt is sprinkled, every attack of the enemy may be repulsed, and your Holy Spirit may be present to keep us safe at all times. Through Christ our Lord.

The salt is added to the blessed water without saying anything.

The Baptismal Liturgy:

1. After blessing the water, use a suitable container to draw enough blessed water from the font:
 - to pour some over each person to be baptized
 - to place in the holy water fonts if that is desired
 - to be used for sprinkling during the renewal of baptismal promises at the Vigil and on Easter Sunday morning
2. With enough water set aside, the priest and deacon and ministers can then proceed with the baptismal liturgy.
3. During this year, baptisms are not to be done by immersion.

II. *At the Mass During the Day*

Everything may proceed as usual. For the rite of the renewal of baptismal promises, use the blessed water drawn for that purpose from the font during the Vigil.

OTHER NOTES:

- 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.