



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SUNYANI

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**TO: All Priests and Religious
All Lay Faithful**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

LITURGICAL GUIDELINES FOR THE CELEBRATION OF HOLY WEEK IN THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SUNYANI

Receive greetings of Peace from Sunyani!

In anticipation of the Holy Week liturgies last year, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments had issued a number of broad guidelines. So, dioceses will need to bring together current civic mandates, the knowledge and experience gained from a year of living with COVID-19 pandemic, and norms of the Holy Week liturgies into a celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ that is both reverent and safe for all Catholics who participate.

In general terms, the current guidelines for the celebration of the Mass and sacraments still apply, including social distancing, wearing of nose masks, washing of hands and reasonable sanitization measures. With reference to the Decree issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments on 25th March 2020, the guidelines given for the celebration of Holy Week in that document can be followed. Some of these directions are also evident in the rubrics in the Roman Missal.

PALM SUNDAY

The first form of the Palm Sunday entrance, the procession, should not be used. Instead, the parish Churches should use the second form of the Palm Sunday entrance, called the Solemn Entrance (see Roman Missal: Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord, nos. 12-14 as below).

When a procession outside the Church cannot take place, the entrance of the Lord is celebrated inside the Church by means of a Solemn Entrance before the principal Mass (no. 12).

Holding branches in their hands, the faithful gather either outside, in front of the church door, or inside the church itself. The Priest and ministers and a representative group of the faithful go to a suitable place in the church outside the sanctuary, where at least the greater part of the faithful can see the rite (no. 13).

*While the priest approaches the appointed place, the antiphon **Hosanna** or another appropriate chant is sung. Then the blessing of branches and the proclamation of the Gospel of the Lord's*

*entrance into Jerusalem take place as above (nos. 5-7). After the Gospel, the priest processes solemnly with the ministers and the representative group of the faithful through the church to the sanctuary, while the responsory **As the Lord entered** (no. 10) or another appropriate chant is sung (no. 14).*

According to the Decree of the Congregation, the second form is to be used in the Cathedral churches (see Decree-In time of Covid-19, II, 25 March, 2020).

The Simple Entrance makes no provision for the blessing of branches and the proclamation of the Gospel of the Lord's entrance into Jerusalem. The Mass begins the usual way. Since the Church in Ghana likes to carry palm branches to celebrate Palm Sunday, I recommend the second form to be used in the cathedral, parishes and all stations.

MAUNDY THURSDAY/ MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

1. This begins with the tabernacle empty (cf. Roman Missal: Mass of the Lord's Supper, no. 5). Enough bread should be consecrated for communion to the sick/ homebound and the people next day.

2. The washing of the feet is to be omitted. In its place, and as another suitable way to respond at this Mass to Jesus' mandate of fraternal charity, parishes should highlight John 13:34 and the unique rubric at the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, where gifts for the poor may be presented with bread and wine (no. 14).

3. At the conclusion of the Mass, the procession to the reservation is omitted and the Blessed Sacrament is to be returned to the tabernacle. Thus, following the communion, the ciborium is placed on the corporal and the Prayer after Communion is said from the chair.

If the tabernacle is located in the sanctuary, the ciborium is placed in the tabernacle, and the Blessed Sacrament is incensed before closing the tabernacle door (no. 39). All present may then remain for the traditional period of adoration.

If the tabernacle is located elsewhere in the church, the ciborium should stay on the altar so that those in the nave may remain in the Church for a brief period of adoration before returning the Blessed Sacrament to its place of reservation.

GOOD FRIDAY

1. The Decree of the Congregation in 2020 was silent on the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday. Again, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic we find ourselves in, Stations of the Cross with processions through streets is omitted. I therefore recommend to have the Stations of the Cross in the Church premises or in the Church as it is done on Fridays in Lent.

2. The Solemn intercessions take place as usual, but I ask that the eleventh petition offered in 2020 be repeated in 2021 amid the ongoing pandemic.

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.

Let us kneel. Pray in silence. Let us stand.

Almighty and merciful God, source of all life, health, and healing, look with compassion on our world, brought low by diseases; 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. Amen.

3. The adoration of the Cross by kissing it shall be limited solely to the celebrant. After the priest has adored the Cross, he may hold the Cross elevated higher for a brief time, for the faithful to adore it in silence (**Roman Missal: Good Friday, no. 19**). Alternatively, ministers may hold the Cross at the front of the sanctuary and the faithful may process forward single file, observing social distancing, and venerate the Cross by genuflecting or bowing or touching with hands properly sanitized.

EASTER VIGIL

According to the Decree, this will be celebrated only in Cathedral and parish churches.

1. The Decree is silent on the blessing of the fire and the preparation of the Paschal Candle, but this ceremony can be held when all the necessary COVID protocols are followed.

2. The Liturgy of the Word; since the Church is permitted to have the celebration within two hours only, it will be appropriate to reduce the readings from nine to about five, with three from the Old Testament (including **Exodus 14: 15- 15: 1**) and two from the New Testament (**Romans 6: 3- 11 and Mark 16: 1- 7**).

3. From the Decree of 2020 by the Congregation, only the renewal of baptismal promises is mentioned in the Baptismal Liturgy. If it is really necessary to have baptisms, the usual health protocols should be observed. If there are many candidates for baptism, the preliminary baptismal rites can be performed in the morning of the Holy Saturday and the baptism itself done during the Easter Vigil starting, for example, from the Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith. It is highly not permitted to have the entire baptismal ceremony before the Easter Vigil. Ideally, those preparing to receive the Sacrament of Baptism ought to receive it at Easter Vigil, but the reception of this sacrament may be delayed according to circumstances.

With prayerful blessings and while wishing a fruitful celebration of Holy Week, I remain,

Yours Sincerely in Christ Jesus,

+ Matthew Gyamfi

MOST REV. MATTHEW KWASI GYAMFI

Bishop of Sunyani

