

# OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT  
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To: All Clergy  
From: Bishop Frank J. Caggiano  
Re: The Liturgical Celebrations of Holy Week, the Triduum and Easter  
Date: March 25, 2020

Last Monday I informed you that, effective that day, all weekday and Sunday public Masses celebrated in the presence of the lay faithful were temporarily suspended in the Diocese of Bridgeport through Friday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>. At that time, it was my deep hope that the suspension could be lifted before Palm Sunday.

Unfortunately, given the continuing spread of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and the restrictions placed upon all of us by State and local authorities, I am sorry to inform you that **there will be no liturgical celebrations in the presence of the lay faithful for Holy Week, the Triduum and Easter this year. More specifically, the temporary suspension of all public celebration of Mass will remain in effect through April 30<sup>th</sup>, unless otherwise notified.**

In light of the recent Decree from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (<http://www.cultodivino.va/content/cultodivino/it/documenti/decreti-general/decreti-general/2020/decreto-triduo-pasquale-2020.html>) and considering the recommendations of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I wish to offer the following directives to all Pastors, which pertain only to this year of 2020:

## General Considerations

I encourage all Pastors to celebrate the Easter Triduum liturgies this year, even in the absence of the lay faithful. To the extent possible, all liturgies should be live-streamed so that the lay faithful can participate in real time. Triduum liturgies may not be videotaped in advance, and they may not be transferred to other dates.

Any celebrations may include the participation of the other priests or deacons assigned to or residing at the parish, but **no more than five 5** should be present in person. Given the solemnity of these liturgies, a musician and cantor may assist and also provide responses. Only a priest or deacon should proclaim the readings, and no Acolyte is permitted. In all situations, proper social distancing must be maintained at all times.

Going forward, the above restrictions on the number present at liturgies apply to all private Masses celebrated in the Diocese.

### **Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion**

Many parishes ordered palms several months ago and will not be able to change their orders. If palms cannot be cancelled or returned, palms should be blessed in the context of Mass. In those cases, the "Second Form: The Solemn Entrance" should be used for Palm Sunday Mass so that the palms can be blessed within Mass. If more than one Mass is celebrated at an individual parish, the "Third Form: The Simple Entrance" may be used at subsequent Masses, provided that all the palms are blessed.

**Blessed palms are not to be distributed on Palm Sunday**; rather, a single Sunday at a later date will be designated, tentatively **Pentecost Sunday**, when all parishes can distribute blessed palms on the same day.

The narrative of the Lord's Passion is to be read in its entirety by a Deacon or, if there is no Deacon present, by a Priest. It should not be read in parts.

**My celebration of Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion will be taped and made available on the Diocesan website from 8:00 AM on Sunday, April 5<sup>th</sup>.**

### **Chrism Mass**

**The celebration of the Chrism Mass will take place as scheduled on Holy Thursday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, at 10:00 AM at Saint Augustine Cathedral.**

I will celebrate the Mass in the presence of the Vicar General, the priests who live at the Cathedral Parish, as well as a Master of Ceremonies and a musician. The Mass will be live-streamed so that the clergy, consecrated men and women and lay faithful throughout the Diocese can participate electronically.

Priests of the Diocese are invited to reaffirm their Renewal of Priestly Promises in a spiritual manner privately.

The Blessing of Oils will take place during the Mass, and the sacred oils will be maintained in safekeeping and made available to parishes at a later date when they can be safely distributed. Until the newly-blessed oils are available, clergy may continue to use their current oil stocks.

If a parish experiences a critical shortage of the Oil of the Sick, the Pastor should contact me directly so that arrangements can be made to have the oil delivered.

### **Triduum Liturgies**

## **Mass of the Lord's Supper**

Pastors who celebrate the Mass of the Lord's Supper should note the following alterations to the liturgy:

- Washing of the feet is to be omitted;
- There is no procession of the Blessed Sacrament to an Altar of Repose. The Blessed Sacrament should be kept in the tabernacle;
- Since there will be no Altars of Repose, churches should remain closed on the evening of Holy Thursday in order to prevent crowds from gathering, which will be difficult to monitor.

**My celebration of the Mass of the Lord's Supper will be live-streamed at 7:00 PM from Saint Augustine Cathedral and available on the Diocesan website.**

## **The Celebration of the Passion of the Lord**

At the end of the Solemn Intercessions, the following special intention should be added in light of the Coronavirus crisis:

### **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.

Adoration of the Holy Cross is to be done without kissing or touching the Cross, even if the priest celebrant alone offers the veneration. A genuflection or profound bow are recommended.

**My celebration of the Celebration of the Passion of the Lord will be live-streamed at 3:00 PM from Saint Augustine Cathedral and available on the Diocesan website.**

### **The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night**

The Easter Vigil may be celebrated this year at all parish churches, at the Catherine Dennis Keefe Queen of the Clergy Residence and at Saint John Fisher Seminary and *Redemptoris Mater* Seminary. **No celebration of the Easter Vigil is permitted at any other location within the Diocese.**

The entire celebration of the Easter Vigil must take place during the night, so that it begins after nightfall and ends before daybreak on Easter Sunday.

Please take note of the following prescriptions for the Easter Vigil:

- The liturgy begins with the Sign of the Cross, the usual Greeting and Introductory Invitation;
- During the Service of Light, the preparation and lighting of the fire (*Lucernarium*) is to be omitted;
- The Paschal Candle should be lit, but there is no procession;
- The Easter Proclamation (*Exsultet*) follows as usual;
- The Liturgy of the Word takes place according to the rubrics;
- For the Liturgy of Baptism:
  - the Litany of Saints is omitted;
  - the blessing of water is permitted, but the baptismal font is not to be blessed;
  - the “Renewal of Baptismal Promises” is required for all who participate in the Vigil;
- Regarding the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA):
  - The celebration of the Easter sacraments for the Elect and Candidates will be postponed throughout the Diocese to a later date, most likely during a celebration of the extended version of the Vigil of Pentecost;
  - Baptized candidates who were to be Confirmed, receive First Holy Communion and make a Profession of Faith at the Easter Vigil may be received into the Church at any time after public Masses resume in the Diocese and candidates are ready. The “Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church” should be used (*RCIA*, Part II, n. 5);
  - The Period of Enlightenment and Scrutinies will not be celebrated this year;

- For any Elect or Catechumen who is in danger of death, Pastors should follow the “Christian Initiation of a person in danger of death” (*RCIA*, Part II, n. 3). Note also that the “Rite for Exceptional Circumstances” in the *Pastoral Care of the Sick* includes the Christian Initiation of the Dying.

**My celebration of the Easter Vigil in the Holy Night will be live-streamed at 7:00 PM from Saint Augustine Cathedral and available on the Diocesan website.**

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Please know how deeply grateful I am to all of you for your continued cooperation and leadership during this extraordinary time in the life of the Church and the world.

Be assured of my daily prayers.