Directives for Parishes – UPDATED 4/29/20

These directives are normative. Any deviations from these directives must be submitted in writing to the Bishop for approval.

Opening the Churches for Private Prayer

1. Beginning Monday, May 4th, at the discretion of the pastor, the doors of churches may be open for short visits only for private/devotional prayer, only if the following can be observed:
   o During the scheduled hours the doors are to be left in an open position to minimize contact.
   o Those entering should wear a mask or face covering that covers the mouth and nose at all times. Parishes could have volunteers make masks that would be available for those who don’t yet have one.
   o Hand sanitizer is available at the entrance.
   o Signs should be posted, in English, Spanish, and any other required languages, with instructions regarding social distancing, etc.
   o No holy water in the fonts.
   o Hours should be limited according to the discretion of the pastor.
   o The number present must be carefully controlled to allow for proper distancing. There should be markers and pews taped off to help people in keeping proper distance from each other.
   o Pews should be carefully sanitized after each visitor. See the CDC guidelines for proper disinfecting at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html
   o Due to social distancing requirements, Adoration Chapels should remain closed.

2. Public distribution of Holy Communion is not permitted at this time.

3. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament may be permitted. If the Blessed Sacrament is exposed, the proper liturgical directives should be followed.

Mass

1. Important reminder: the faithful are dispensed from the obligation to participate in Sunday Mass until further notice.

2. Public celebrations of the Mass continue to be suspended, until further notice.
   o Parishes are encouraged to continue to livestream Sunday Mass.
3. Our people must know that even with public Masses suspended, our concern and obligation for their spiritual care and the common good continues.
   - This is a graced time for all of us to reflect on how we are living out the reality of our own domestic churches.
   - Parishes should take steps to make sure that those parishioners who may be socially isolated, especially the elderly, are cared for by the Church. Parish ministers and volunteers might give them a phone call and offer to pray with them and ask if there is anything they need (groceries, etc.).
   - Parishes should be especially concerned for the spiritual care of those parishioners who do not have access to the spiritual resources available on the internet. As an example, prayer cards and articles could be mailed to them.

Directives for other Liturgies

For other celebrations, parishes should consider livestreaming for those who are not be able to attend. If necessary, celebrations may be held outside of the church building (within parish grounds).

Funerals

1. Funeral Vigils and public visitations are suspended.

2. Funeral liturgies are at the discretion of the pastor and the policy of the funeral home. The number of people present at the funeral liturgy and the Committal will depend on the policies of the cemetery, funeral home, and County Health Department.

3. No receptions are to be held on parish property.

4. Families are encouraged to request a Memorial Mass at a later date.

Matrimony

1. Celebrations of the Sacrament of Matrimony are generally to be postponed.
   - If a situation is urgent, Matrimony outside Mass may be celebrated simply, with an absolute minimum number of people present (priest or deacon, bride, groom, and two witnesses) observing proper social distancing.
o Be aware that many counties are not issuing marriage licenses while restrictions are in place, or only issuing them in emergency situations.

**Baptism of Children**

1. Celebrations of baptism may occur as needed.
   - The number present should be limited to the **absolute minimum**- child, parents, godparents, minister.
   - The rite should be simplified as much as possible- the anointing with the Oil of Catechumens and the *ephphetha* rite should be omitted. The anointing with Chrism may be done with a cotton ball/swab, which should be properly disposed of afterwards.
   - Baptism should be done by pouring.

**RCIA**

1. Since it appears that we will not be able to gather in large numbers for some time, even after restrictions are lifted, parishes with significant numbers of elect/candidates should make plans for initiating them in small groups. At the discretion of the pastor, individuals may be initiated similarly to the directives for infant baptism, above- with only the recipient and sponsor(s) present. Once gatherings of some size are allowed, those in RCIA may be initiated in groups which accord with the guidelines of public health authorities. Detailed instructions for initiation, especially those adult elect who may not have undergone a scrutiny, will be sent separately.

**Penance**

1. Drive-in opportunities for the Sacrament of Penance may be offered, in accord with the guidelines which have been sent separately. With churches open for private prayer, confession may be offered inside the church, but outside of a confessional, and only if the circumstances allow for the requisite privacy and social distancing. As with drive-in confession, some sort of impermeable barrier should be set up between priest and penitent.

2. Parishes should continue to catechize the faithful through the means available to them (social media, etc.) on the teaching of the Church regarding forgiveness of sins by making an act of perfect contrition when the Sacrament of Penance is unavailable.

**Blessings and Popular Devotions**

1. Celebrations of blessings, such as Quinceañeras, are to be postponed.

2. We encourage popular devotions to be celebrated at home with the family.
   - Parishes might consider livestreaming devotions.
Anointing of the Sick

1. The following are to be observed in making house calls:

   o Priests at high risk of serious illness from COVID-19 should consider asking another priest to take calls where the sick person has symptoms consistent with COVID-19.
   o Priests should wear gloves and face covering and should not remain in the room longer than 15 minutes.
   o Care must be taken not to contaminate the oil stock. A cotton ball should be prepared with enough oil for both the anointing of the forehead and the hands. Following the anointing, it should be placed in a sealed bag for burning when convenient.

This is a time when many are worried and concerned. Let us be a people who, while using the gifts of prudence and reason, place our trust in the Lord Jesus. This is a crisis, but it is also an opportunity to grow in grace and holiness.