



DIOCESE OF BUFFALO
OFFICE OF WORSHIP

Guidance for Holy Week 2021

The following guidance is meant to assist pastors/administrators and parish leaders to fine-tune plans for Holy Week, especially in regard to COVID. Apart from the guidelines below, the liturgies of Holy Week are to be celebrated according to the rubrics of the Roman Missal. No other adaptations may be made.

Note from Rome

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has issued a Note to bishops and episcopal conferences on the celebration of Holy Week 2021. The text offers basic guidelines to assist bishops in their task of providing for the spiritual welfare of pastors and faithful in living this Great Week in the Church's liturgical year.

The Note calls for "prudent decisions in order that the liturgy can be celebrated fruitfully for the People of God...while respecting the safeguarding of health and what has been prescribed by the authorities responsible for the common good."

As you may have heard through news media and other sources, the Congregation in this recent Note refers to a Decree it issued last year (March 25, 2020) and states that "the guidelines offered for the celebration of Holy Week in that document *can* be followed this year as well. *Situations vary from country to country*, where some have strict lockdown conditions making it impossible for the faithful to gather in Church, while others have returned to a more normal pattern of worship" [emphasis added].

In some countries, the pandemic still presents key challenges in celebrating these liturgies normally. For instance, in Trondheim, Norway, the Bishop there celebrated the first diocesan Mass with more than 10 people in attendance on Ash Wednesday. (Which was held outside to allow for as many people as possible to attend.)

Thankfully, in the United States, and in our own state and diocese, the positivity rate of infection seems to continue to trend downward and the number of people receiving the vaccine seems to trend upward, both blessings indeed, even despite lingering challenges.

As such, this guidance seeks to update previous documents issued by the diocese, while still encouraging parishes to observe many of the established health and safety protocols already in place. All materials are available on the diocesan website at <https://www.buffalodiocese.org/coronavirus> or <https://www.buffalodiocese.org/office-of-worship>

As no amount of written guidance can answer every question, please feel free to contact the Office of Worship regarding questions specific to your pastoral situation.

Basic Principles That Remain In Effect

- The current Diocesan Liturgical Guidelines (such as the *Forward in Faith* document and various updates) will still be in effect for the long term, including, but not limited to:
 - All congregants over the age of two will continue to wear a mask throughout the liturgy, unless to receive Holy Communion or if there is some other serious medical condition that prevents them from doing so.
 - Members of different households should continue to maintain six feet of physical distance.
 - Churches and other spaces will continue to be sanitized before/after each Mass.
 - The dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass remains in place.

Music and Hymnals

Hymnals (unless personally owned/used) should not be made available, but if needed, a disposable worship aid with the order of worship could be employed with proper licensing, if applicable.

Full choirs are still not permitted, and congregational singing is to be discouraged. A smaller ensemble of singers is permitted (e.g., multiple cantors; a voice or two for each section - SATB), provided that the current health and safety protocols are observed (i.e., masks, dividers, distance of about 12 feet between singers, sanitizing).

Likewise, a prudent number of instrumentalists is permitted. Non-wind instruments (apart from the organ) are preferable to wind instruments.

Altar Servers and other Liturgical Ministries

The use of a prudent number of altar servers and other ministers (e.g. lectors, Eucharistic Ministers) is permitted, at the discretion of the pastor / parish administrator and the servers (or parents) / ministers themselves.

Some may wish to call upon these ministries to assist with the intricate liturgies of Holy Week and beyond. However, it is suggested that until the obligation to attend Mass is reinstated, this be done on a limited, voluntary basis (i.e. without the pressure of a fixed schedule for servers / ministers).

Please communicate your specific plan to the parish at large via the bulletin / other means, as the Office of Worship has received a number of inquiries, in particular as regards altar servers.

Easter Duty

After they have been initiated into the Most Holy Eucharist, all the faithful are bound by the obligation of receiving Communion at least once a year. This precept must be fulfilled during the Easter season, *unless for a good reason it is fulfilled at another time during the year.*

Since the dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass remains (for the foreseeable future) in place, Easter Duty, while admirable for those who may fulfill it, is also dispensed.

Once the dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass is lifted, the importance of Easter Duty, along with regular attendance at Mass, will be a part of ongoing catechesis and evangelization.

Live-streaming

Please continue to follow the legal requirements in regard to proper licensing of music and texts in any live-stream broadcast, regardless of the medium or service employed.

The Vatican's Note highlights how the use of social media has greatly assisted the local Church "in offering support and closeness to their communities during the pandemic." It suggests that this media outreach continue and encourages the faithful who are unable to attend their own church to follow diocesan celebrations as a sign of unity.

The text also recalls the importance of returning to a normal experience of Christian life through the physical presence of the faithful at Mass, where circumstances permit.

In-Person Ticketing and Reservations

While Houses of Worship are no longer inhibited by a specific percentage or state-imposed restriction, it is important for each parish to know, generally, what their church and/or alternate/overflow worship spaces may hold with the requirement to maintain six feet of physical separation between households.

Even if a parish has not had to employ them throughout the pandemic, as at Christmas, it is recommended that ticketing/reservation methods be employed to effectively and pastorally manage the capacity for congregants.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

The three scrutinies are to be celebrated with the elect in preparation for their celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation, with practical adaptation on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent, using the Year A readings.

The scrutinies and the presentations should be celebrated with social distancing guidelines in mind. Consider how the elect and their godparents might be spaced out in your worship space. If there are a large number of the elect, consider celebrating the rites at several Masses.

The Sacraments of Initiation for the elect are to be celebrated at the Easter Vigil.

The celebration of Reception into Full Communion as well as the Sacraments of Confirmation and the Most Holy Eucharist for baptized non-Catholic Christians may be celebrated at the Easter Vigil or on other days, especially the Sundays of Easter and Pentecost.

The celebration of the Sacraments of Confirmation and the Most Holy Eucharist for uncatechized adult Catholics is to be celebrated at the Easter Vigil or on Pentecost.

Reminder: Please refer to the memorandum sent by Sr. Regina Murphy, SSMN, Chancellor, on February 8, 2021 regarding the necessity of priests to request the faculty to Confirm those baptized in the Catholic Church, in accord with canons 883 and 884.

*These requests should be sent to Bishop Fisher **no later than March 15, 2021.***

Palm Sunday

The “Second Form: The Solemn Entrance” (see *Roman Missal* “Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion” no. 12 and following) should be used in place of the “First Form: The Procession” in the following way:

- The entrance of the Lord is celebrated inside the church.
- The faithful, holding branches in their hands, gather inside the church itself.
- The priest and ministers and a representative group (4-5 people) may go to a suitable place in the church outside the sanctuary, where the greater part of the faithful can see the rite.
- When the priest approaches the appointed place, the antiphon *Hosanna* or another appropriate chant is sung.
- The blessing of branches and the proclamation of the Gospel of the Lord’s entrance into Jerusalem take place as in the *Roman Missal* “Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord” 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 an appropriate chant is sung.
- Arriving at the altar, the priest venerates it. He then goes to the chair and, omitting the Introductory Rites of the Mass and the Kyrie (Lord, have mercy), he says the Collect of the Mass, and then continues Mass in the usual way.

Please Note: The distribution of palms to the congregation should be done prior to Mass by ushers or other ministers of hospitality who don masks and perhaps gloves (hands should be sanitized ahead of time). Blessed palms left behind in the pews after Mass should be set aside and disposed of properly.

Palms should not simply be made available on tables in church vestibules, given the likelihood that they would be handled by many individuals coming and going.

Of course, the “Third Form: The Simple Entrance” remains an option.

Proclamation of the Passion

If the reading of the Passion is to be done in parts, consider assigning the “voice” and the “crowd” to one or two lectors or music ministers with separate microphones since it may not be feasible to produce disposable worship aids for the entire congregation to follow.

The Chrism Mass

The Chrism Mass will be celebrated, as is the tradition of our diocese, on Tuesday, March 30, 2021 at 7:00 PM at Saint Joseph Cathedral.

This will be a ticketed event. All diocesan and religious priests are invited to attend, in particular to greet the Bishop and to, with him, renew their priestly promises.

Tickets will be made available to deacons and other faithful via a lottery system to encourage a fair distribution.

Please call the Cathedral at (716) 854-5855 or email stjcathedral@buffalodiocese.org to reserve your ticket or to express your interest in attending. Tickets will be emailed a few days before the Mass.

N.B. — Distribution of Oils

This year, we are modifying the traditional method for the distribution of oils. Each parish will be provided with a set of reusable, plastic bottles containing the Oil for Catechumens, the Oil of the Sick, and the Sacred Chrism. ***Please do not bring your own containers.***

The bottles provided will be pre-labeled and distributed as efficiently as possible following the Mass. Please retain these bottles until next year, and return them (empty) the night of the Chrism Mass. Please do not label these bottles with your parish name, as they will be cleaned and reused in the future for other parishes.

Each parish will receive at least 8 oz. of each oil, to which another 7 oz. of olive oil may be added at your parish. If you feel that you will need more than this, please contact Fr. Seán Paul at (716) 854-5855 or spfleming@buffalodiocese.org.

Bishop Fisher will be present to greet each of the priests at the end of the liturgy.

Holy Thursday (The Mass of the Lord's Supper)

Washing of the Feet

As noted in the *Roman Missal*, The Washing of Feet is optional. It is recommended that, in keeping with the health and safety protocols that were employed for the distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday, this rite be omitted this year.

If it is performed, please ensure proper physical distancing and choose individuals representative of the parish. The rubrics allow for a number less than twelve.

Whether the Washing of the Feet is carried out or not, *the creed is not said*.

Procession of Gifts for the Poor

The optional procession of the faithful in which gifts for the poor are presented with the bread and wine is not to take place this year, in keeping with current guidelines. However, a centrally-located receptacle for offerings for the poor (food, clothes, etc.) could be made available to the faithful when entering the church, chapel, etc. for Mass.

Transfer and Reposition of the Blessed Sacrament

The Transfer of the Most Blessed Sacrament is to take place. However, only a prudent number of people are to be involved in the procession (i.e., priest, ministers, and a representative group of the faithful); masks are to be worn and physical distancing is to be maintained.

The celebrant could ask the faithful who are not able to be part of the procession to remain in prayer in the main church or another location until they are able to enter and pray safely before the Blessed Sacrament.

The place of reposition should be appropriately ventilated and have ample space, but still limited in the number of people allowed in at once. Ministers of Hospitality should direct the faithful to the place of reposition and monitor the capacity. Kneelers and/or chairs should be sanitized regularly, in between uses.

The tradition of visiting churches to pray before the Blessed Sacrament after the Mass of the Lord's Supper is permitted. Visitors should sign in, providing a name and email address or phone number. They should, as in all other situations, wear masks and maintain six feet of physical distance.

As always, the period of adoration should conclude at or before midnight, without solemnity.

Friday of the Passion of the Lord: Good Friday

The Liturgy of the Word

The Liturgy of the Word proceeds in the normal manner, according to the established rubrics and guidelines.

The Solemn Intercessions

Bishop Fisher has granted permission to add an 11th and 12th intercession to the Solemn Intercessions for Good Friday 2021. The *Roman Missal* notes that “in a situation of grave public need, the Diocesan Bishop may permit or order the addition of a special intention” (Good Friday, no. 13). Permission is granted to pastors to add these intercessions below, but it is not mandated.

Following the same style as the first ten intercessions, the deacon may call for the faithful to kneel during the silent prayer, then rise for the concluding prayer.

Note: “The faithful may remain either kneeling or standing throughout the entire period of the prayers” (Good Friday, no. 11).

Please use the following approved texts:

(see attached for chant settings)

XI. For the victims of abuse

Let us pray, dearly beloved, for all victims of abuse,
that our God and Lord be pleased to give them peace,
that our Catholic communities may offer them love and support,
and that their faith may be sustained.

Prayer in silence.

Then the Priest says:

Almighty ever-living God,
You sent your Son to walk among us
and to heal all those who suffered in body and spirit.
Watch over those who have been victims of abuse,
restore their trust,
console them with your grace,
and embrace them with your love.
Through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

XII. 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. *Amen.*

Adoration of the Holy Cross

For the Adoration of the Holy Cross, a single cross without a corpus should be used.

Adoration by means of a touch or kiss is not allowed due to COVID concerns. As stated in the *Roman Missal*, it is appropriate to reverence the Cross “by a simple genuflection or by some other sign” (Good Friday, no. 18) which could include a bow or pausing to pray at the Cross.

As an alternative, the option of simply showing the Cross to the faithful may be employed. “The priest...takes the Cross and, standing in the middle before the altar, invites the people in a few words to adore the Holy Cross and afterwards holds the Cross elevated higher for a brief time, for the faithful to adore in silence” (*Roman Missal*, Good Friday, no. 19).

Distribution of Holy Communion

Holy Communion may only be distributed during the Solemn Celebration of the Passion. No other communal distribution of Holy Communion may take place on Good Friday (for example, during Stations of the Cross or other secondary services.) All established protocols for Mass should be applied to this distribution of Communion.

Holy Saturday

The Blessing of Easter Foods

The Blessing of Easter Foods on Holy Saturday is permitted, provided that food is safely sealed and the typical COVID precautions are observed.

Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord

The Easter Vigil

The Easter Vigil is to be celebrated only once in a given church. (See *Roman Missal* "The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night" no. 2)

Sunset will be at approximately 7:45 PM on Saturday, April 3, 2021.

This means that the Easter Vigil should not begin before 8:15 PM.

The Solemn Beginning of the Vigil or Lucernarium

The *Lucernarium* is to be celebrated as indicated in the *Roman Missal*. A limited number of people may participate in the procession (i.e. priest, ministers, and perhaps a representative group of the faithful, perhaps even including the elect or candidates).

Consider using the sound system or other means to include those in the church, most of whom should be asked to remain at their places in prayerful anticipation.

Note: Additional paschal candles for multiple worship sites may be prepared in advance of the Easter Vigil and blessed alongside the primary candle. They are lit, but are then extinguished at the end of the Exsultet. When they are brought to the other sites, they may be lit and carried to the sanctuary in the entrance procession.

Distribution of Candles to the Faithful

In like manner to the distribution of palms to the congregation, candles should be distributed prior to Mass by ushers or other ministers of hospitality who don masks and perhaps gloves (hands should be sanitized ahead of time). Candles left behind in the pews after Mass should be disposed of properly.

The Exsultet

The *Exsultet* may be sung or said; the shorter form may also be employed.

The Liturgy of the Word

Nine readings are provided for the Vigil, seven from the Old Testament and two from the New Testament (the Epistle and Gospel), all of which should be read whenever possible, so that the character of the Vigil may be preserved.

However, the number of Old Testament readings may be reduced to three, according to the precepts of the *Roman Missal*, including always Exodus 14, which should never be omitted.

In place of the responsorial psalm for each reading, a period of sacred silence may be observed. In this case the "Let us pray" is omitted prior to the prayer after the reading.

The Baptismal Liturgy

Baptism by immersion is discouraged, in particular if there are multiple elect to be baptized. Instead, fresh water is to be poured over each elect from one font (infusion).

Some additional preparation is necessary in regard to not only Baptism itself, but also the Renewal of Baptismal Promises:

- Water should be blessed in the one font if possible.
- Water for each Baptism should be drawn into one large, separate vessel or into vessels for each elect for pouring.
- Water for the Renewal of Baptismal Promises for the Vigil and Easter Sunday Masses should be drawn into the *aspersorium* (holy water "bucket")

Confirmation

In keeping with the guidelines already established for the celebration of Confirmation, the laying on of hands is done by the *confirming minister only* extending their hands over the candidates. The celebrant will clean his thumb with alcohol wipes after each chrismation and dispose of these wipes properly following the liturgy by burning/burial. (Cotton balls are not to be employed for the chrismation.)

Please Note: As a reminder, with adults and children of a catechetical age, all three sacraments of initiation are to be administered at a single liturgy. (See RCIA, no 215; Canon 842.2; NCCB Statutes 14)

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

The Liturgy of the Eucharist is to be celebrated with regard to all previously established guidelines for the celebration of Mass.

However, due to the significant connection between Baptism and Eucharist, and the fact that since this is the first time the newly baptized are able to approach the altar and join the assembly in the offering of the Eucharist, at the Easter Vigil:

- Some of the newly baptized may present the gifts, so long as the bread is in a ciborium with a lid and the cruet is sealed. (If possible, they should sanitize their hands before the presentation.)
- Because the Eucharist is the completion of Christian Initiation, the newly baptized may receive Holy Communion under both kinds from the priest, either via intinction or separate chalices prepared for them, whichever is most practical, at the discretion of the pastor.

Easter Sunday Mass During the Day

Masses are to be celebrated as indicated in the *Roman Missal* and according to previously established COVID protocols.

The Renewal of Baptismal Promises takes place after the homily, and the sprinkling takes place with water blessed at the Easter Vigil. *Please note the instructions above for reserving the water carefully for this purpose.*

Please direct any questions or need for clarification to Rev. Seán Paul Fleming, Director of the Office of Worship at spfleming@buffalodiocese.org or (716) 854-5855, ext. 20.