

Liturgical Guidelines and Protocols During the Time of Suspension of Public Masses

Catholic Diocese of Saginaw + Friday of the 3rd Week of Lent + March 20, 2020

INTRODUCTION

We are indeed in uncharted territory and the countless questions received help us to clarify our assessment and application of the following guidelines and protocols.

Hopefully by now, we have become familiar with the term “social distancing.” Basically, it means that: (1) we increase distances between persons; (2) we limit the number of people gathered in any given place, and (3) we limit the amount of time we spend with those gathered. Our challenge remains as to how to be pastorally present while honoring these protocols. It has been suggested that it may help to set our “default” to showing our Christian love in these unprecedented times by simply staying apart – not drawing closer.

Following the decision to suspend public celebration of the Church’s liturgical life, below please find specific guidance on how best to proceed with celebrating the sacraments and liturgical life of the Church and allowing our sacred spaces to remain open for personal devotion during this unprecedented time of serious health concerns throughout the Diocese of Saginaw and beyond.

Please note that these guidelines and protocols are derived from the present recommendations issued by the local, state and federal agencies. However, modifications and changes will be made as this unmatched predicament changes.

KEEPING CHURCH BUILDINGS OPEN (for Personal Devotional Prayer)

Our Churches (Chapels and Worship Spaces) should remain open for private prayer for the Faithful and for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (if it is reserved) during a timeframe best determined by each pastor or director of parish life (given the constraints of staffing and the need to perform routine cleaning, sanitizing and maintenance). Social distancing is to be followed (at least six feet between people at prayer).

CELEBRATIONS OF THE EUCHARIST (Daily/Sunday Masses)

In 1999, Pope Saint John Paul II, in his *Holy Thursday Address*, stated:

In the Eucharist, the priest personally draws near to the inexhaustible mystery of Christ and of His prayer to the Father. He can immerse himself daily in the

mystery of redemption and grace by celebrating Holy Mass, which retains its meaning and value even when, for a just reason, it is offered without the participation of the faithful, yet always for the faithful and for the whole world (#6).

Keeping these words in mind, priests are encouraged to celebrate Mass daily either alone or with limited others (given our federal and state protocols). The celebration of the Eucharist is of utmost importance during this time of uncertainty. The grace of the sacrament is beyond time and space and is effective. In the words of Pope Saint Paul VI [*MYSTERIUM FIDEI*, no. 32], "For such a Mass brings a rich and abundant treasure of special graces to help the priest himself, the faithful, the whole Church and the whole world toward salvation – and this same abundance of graces is not gained through mere reception of Holy Communion."

When priests are celebrating the Eucharist, every attempt should be made for at least one assisting minister to be present (for example a deacon, server, one of the faithful, etc.). Guidelines for *MASS AT WHICH ONLY ONE MINISTER PARTICIPATES* are laid out in the **General Instruction of the Roman Missal [GIRM]** nos. 252-272. In no. 254, we read, "Mass should not be celebrated without a minister, or at least one of the faithful, except for just and reasonable cause. In this case, the greetings, the instructions, and the blessing at the end of Mass are omitted." Our given situation is deemed "a just and reasonable cause".

Some have inquired about the celebration of Mass or "Word and Communion" services within parishioners' homes or nursing homes and/or care facilities. These are not permitted. They certainly violate the principles of social distancing, but even more insidiously, they create a sense of "favoritism" or "elitism" within a parish community.

MASS INTENTIONS

In parishes where Mass Intentions have already been set for a given day, the daily Mass of the priest(s) should be offered for that intention. If no intention is scheduled then it would be very appropriate for the Mass to be offered *pro populo* (for the parishioners), with a prayer for their health and the strengthening of their faith. Mass Intentions that are not able to be offered at this time should be rescheduled for a later date.

ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS

Funerals Outside Mass [**Order of Christian Funerals (OCF)**, no. 295-315] are permitted with only 50 congregants or less. Priests, deacons and lay ministers are asked not to participate in Vigil (Wake) Liturgies. Funeral rites (according to the **OCF**) may also be graveside with the scheduling of Memorial Masses as soon as possible (after the restrictions have been suspended). Family members in vulnerable populations should be encouraged to stay home. Social distancing is to be followed (at least six feet between people at prayer).

ORDER OF BAPTISM OF CHILDREN (Rite of Baptism)

All parishes in the Diocese of Saginaw are asked to observe our diocesan norms concerning the Sacrament of Baptism. At this time, Baptisms are still possible based on pastoral urgency.

However, in order to limit any potential spread of the virus to a vulnerable population, only small, private family Baptisms with fewer than 50 attending are allowed. Use only fresh water that is blessed for each individual Baptism (and immediately drain it to the ground after). Family members in vulnerable populations should be encouraged to stay home. Social distancing is to be followed (at least six feet between people at prayer).

ORDER OF CELEBRATION OF MATRIMONY (Rite of Marriage)

At this time, weddings are still permitted using ***The Order of Celebrating Marriage Without Mass (OCM)***, but should be attended only by asymptomatic family members with fewer than 50 attending. Family members in vulnerable populations should be encouraged to stay home. Social distancing is to be followed (at least six feet between people at prayer). If at all possible, pastors and directors of parish life should work with engaged couples to reschedule their wedding liturgies.

ANOINTING OF THE SICK

There are to be no communal celebrations of the Anointing of the Sick. If done individually or in a health care facility in cases of emergency, follow all protective guidelines. Maintain social distance with everyone in the room so as to offer comfort without making physical contact. Wash hands or sanitize your hands once you enter the room. Permission is given for the anointing to be done with a cotton-tipped swab or a cotton ball (which after is placed in a zip-lock bag to be burned). If Holy Communion is given, it is to be distributed in the hand. Sanitize your hands after each visit.

DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION TO THE SICK AND/OR HOMEBOUND

There have been several inquiries regarding "Communion Outside of Mass." In addition to the principles of social distancing mentioned above, it is also important to remember that a primary reason for reservation of the Blessed Sacrament is for *Viaticum* (and for Communion to the sick). Finally, it is important to ensure that a rite for distribution is celebrated properly and that the Blessed Sacrament is treated with proper reverence and understanding. Keeping all this in mind, we are asking that:

1. Distribution of Holy Communion Outside of Mass be celebrated as Viaticum and in the context of ministry to the sick and dying [***Pastoral Care of the Sick (PCS)***, Part II: Pastoral Care of the Dying, no. 197-211 – adapted to directives already in place].
2. In order to protect the most vulnerable, regular pastoral visits to the homebound (whether in their own houses or health care facilities) are suspended.
3. Emergency pastoral care visits by the priest or deacon are to follow the regulations established and imposed by the health care facilities.
4. There are to be no communal celebrations of "Communion Outside of Mass."

5. To simply “stop by” (or even “drive by”) the parish church for reception of Holy Communion is not permitted. This removes Holy Communion from any proper liturgical context. We also need to be careful not to give parishioners a reason to attempt to congregate in large numbers (which may happen if it becomes known that Holy Communion is being distributed at the local parish church).
6. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) may certainly opt out of bringing Holy Communion to the sick and/or dying.

SACRAMENTS OF CONFIRMATION & EUCHARIST

Unless the suspension of Public Mass is lifted by Easter Week, all celebrations of Confirmation and [1st] Eucharist (to complete the Sacraments of Initiation) with Bishop Gruss will be cancelled and rescheduled. Bishop Gruss is considering a number of options for when all restrictions are lifted and parishes are able to celebrate communally again.

RITE OF PENANCE (Confession/Reconciliation)

The celebration of the *Rite of Penance* (ROP) using the *Rite of Reconciliation of Individual Penitents* (no. 41-47) is permitted, as long as these guidelines and protocols are followed. Chapter III of the Rite (“General Absolution”) is not allowed. For example, priest-confessors may choose to make themselves available during the parish’s regularly scheduled times or when the church is open for private prayer. Care must be taken to clean and disinfect the area in which the rite is celebrated.

The norm is that the Rite of Penance is to be celebrated within the church’s worship space (e.g. confessional, reconciliation room or another designated place). Care must be taken to keep crowds from forming (awaiting their turn to celebrate the sacrament).

The notion of either “drive by” confessions or celebration of the sacrament over an electronic means (e.g. phone, internet, skype, etc.) are prohibited.

THE CHRISM MASS

Given the new directives from the Vatican’s Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (19 March 2020), Bishop Gruss is postponing the celebration of this year’s Chrism Mass to a time to be determined (after the restrictions have been suspended). Therefore, do not dispose of your current Holy Oils until you receive further instructions from the Office of Liturgy once the Chrism Mass has been rescheduled.

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS [RCIA] (and Adapted Rites for Children)

The Bishop has dispensed the Elect from two of the three Scrutinies. Therefore, if you celebrated the First Scrutiny (as prescribed for the Third Sunday of Lent), the two remaining Scrutinies are dispensed. If, however, you have not celebrated at least one Scrutiny, a time should be established for the Elect and, if possible, at least one godparent (recommended no

more than 10 persons at one gathering) to gather with the priest. The following outline is to be used:

- Liturgy of the Word (using the Gospel for either the Fourth or Fifth Week of Lent)
- A Brief Homily
- Invitation to Silent Prayer
- Intercessions for the Elect
- Exorcism
- Dismissal

[Consult the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)* – “Purification and Enlightenment” for ritual prayers and texts, no. 138-177.]

Ideally, the Presentations (of the Creed and Our Father) are celebrated before the Easter Vigil. Bishop Gruss has authorized the celebration of the Christian Initiation of Adults in Exceptional Circumstances which allows for the omission of these Presentations. However, for the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation, the Vigil of Pentecost, Saturday, May 30th has been established for these rituals to take place. Therefore, all the rituals for the *Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation*, as set forth in the **RCIA**, should be followed.

[Consult the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)* – “Third Step: Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation”, no. 206-243. Also, consult with the *Roman Missal* – “The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night”, Third Part: Baptismal Liturgy, no. 37-58 for updated ritual texts.]

NB: Should the need arise, be advised that there are Rites of Initiation in the case of the danger of death (**RCIA**, #370ff).

HOLY WEEK/TRIDUUM LITURGIES

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord and all Triduum Liturgies with Bishop Gruss will be livestreamed from the Cathedral of Mary of the Assumption. Please consult the diocesan website for dates and times.

I: Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

Private Mass ONLY (not announced and/or published and the church is not open)

The *Third Form: The Simple Entrance* should be utilized. The blessed palm branches may then be placed in a convenient location within the parish worship space so that parishioners may come and receive them according to the arrangements of the pastor or director of parish life.

II: Mass of the Lord's Supper (Holy Thursday)

Private Mass ONLY (not announced and/or published and the church is not open)

As indicated in the **Roman Missal** (Mass of the Lord's Supper, no. 1), it is an evening Mass. *The Washing of the Feet* would be omitted. At the end of the Mass, the procession of the Blessed Sacrament to the place of repose is to be omitted and the Blessed Sacrament is to be kept in the tabernacle. Priests who are unable to celebrate Mass should instead pray **Vespers** of that day during which time Bishop Gruss is asking for prayers for the unity of the whole Church and for the safety and health of all people.

III: Friday of the Passion of the Lord (Good Friday)

Private Liturgy ONLY (not announced and/or published and the church is not open)

During the time appointed for *The Adoration of the Holy Cross*, Bishop Gruss is asking all priests to spend an extended period of time in prayer, praying especially for the unity of the whole Church and for the safety and health of all people.

IV: The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night (Easter Vigil)

Bishop Gruss is dispensing all priests from celebrating the Easter Vigil.

He is asking all priests to pray the **Office of Readings** for Easter Sunday.

Liturgical Instructions:

- *The Blessing of the Fire and the Preparation of the Candle* is to take place at the first Sunday Mass after Easter (after all restrictions are lifted) using an adapted text (to be provided by the diocesan Office of Liturgy – which will be made available on our website and will be sent to all pastors, sacramental ministers and directors of parish life in the near future).
- *The Easter Proclamation* is omitted.
- The Entrance Procession takes place as is usual for Mass with the priest-celebrant carrying the Paschal Candle to its place (next to the Ambo).
- Mass continues with the *Sprinkling Rite*.

NB: *Pastors/Sacramental Ministers may elect to prepare the Paschal Candle privately.*

IV: Easter of the Resurrection (Easter Sunday)

Private Mass ONLY (not announced and/or published and the church is not open)

In place of the Penitential Act, the priest blesses the water, using the *Rite for the Blessing and Sprinkling of Water* (Appendix II). Pastors may find it pastorally beneficial to utilize the *Renewal of Baptismal Promises* at all Masses celebrated on the weekend following Easter (after all restrictions are lifted).

NB: *Pastors/Sacramental Ministers may elect to bless the water privately.*

LITURGICAL ADVISORY

Given the above guidelines and protocols, you may wish to consider the following:

- Most parishes have standing orders for their palm branches. Do not cancel this order. You will need palm branches to bless (either during the priest's private Mass or at another designated time) and then be placed in a convenient location within the parish worship space so that parishioners may come and receive them.
- Hand sanitizers may be placed throughout the worship space and in particular near the location for the reception of the palm branches.

LITURGICAL ENVIRONMENT IN SACRED SPACE

Given the fact that there will not be public liturgies during Holy Week and the Triduum, this would not mean that you would ignore “decorating” our worship spaces according to the appropriate liturgical day and/or season (e.g. covering of statues, palm branch arrangements, crosses, lilies and/or spring flowers, etc.). However, prudence should guide you to the extent of such enhancement. In other words, the common sense approach to liturgical environment is always “less is more.” Given our present situation and circumstances, good stewardship of the parish’s financial resources must also be considered.

PARISH AVENUES OF COMMUNICATION

Pastors and directors of parish life are encouraged to tap into all the media resources available (e.g. website, text, email, bulletin, Facebook, MyParish App, etc.) to provide connection, care, comfort and appropriate communications with their parishioners. For example, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) who regularly visit the sick and/or homebound might consider making phone calls or sending greeting cards. Faith Formation leaders, Youth Ministers and teachers might do something similarly – of course age appropriate. The diocese has also published on our website various prayers, activities and resources to assist at this time. They may be passed along to your parishioners via your communication conduits. More resources are being added as time goes on.

PARISH STEWARDSHIP/CONTRIBUTIONS

Though parishioners are unable to attend Mass during this period, it goes without saying that their continuing financial support of the parish is crucial for its ongoing operation and obligations to employees, etc. Even if parishioners are simply holding on to their envelopes with the intention of turning them all in when Masses resume, this does not solve the parish's need to meet its fiscal obligations in the meantime.

Pastors and directors of parish life are invited to share ideas with their people regarding ways to facilitate the weekly offerings of parishioners and support for the church at this time, in keeping with solid financial practice as set forth in governmental and diocesan regulations.

We encourage great pastoral sensitivity to the financial hardships that the pandemic may cause for some people and the grief and sadness that will inevitably arise from the deaths of those who succumb to it.

One simple and very effective way of facilitating contributions in these weeks is through online giving, which makes it possible for parishioners to contribute to the parish from anywhere at any time. Encouraging online giving is a significant way of increasing contributions even apart from the challenges posed by the current pandemic. If your parish does not currently utilize online giving, please contact David Platko (in the Finance Office at 989-797-6621) and he will assist you in finding out how simple it is to set up online giving through Our Sunday Visitor.

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

Pastors and directors of parish life may choose to communicate to their parishioners how to make a *Spiritual Communion*.

ACT OF FAITH: O my God, I firmly believe that you are one God in three divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I believe that your divine Son became man and died for our sins and that he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the Holy Catholic Church teaches because you have revealed them who are eternal truth and wisdom, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. In this faith I intend to live and die. Amen.

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