



Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany

40 North Main Avenue, Albany, New York 12203

Timely Instruction

(relative to COVID-19 pandemic and Governor Cuomo's Executive Order of 03-20-2020)

March 24, 2020

REGARDING BAPTISM:

The following relates mainly to the baptism of **infants or children**; that is, those under the age of discretion (cf. *Order of Baptism of Children*, Introduction, 1). Additionally, some elements apply to adults where there is a grave necessity, such as the danger of death. For the celebration of the baptism for adults who have been preparing for initiation at the Easter Vigil, further directives will be published soon, along with instructions regarding Palm Sunday and the Triduum.

Given health and governmental directives (especially social distancing, hygiene/sanitizing, etc.) and the need to protect the most vulnerable medically, the baptism of infants in our current situation presents some particular factors and difficulties:

- On the one hand, the Church requires that the sacrament should be celebrated within the first few weeks of an infant being born (cf. CIC, can. 867). Any liturgical directives cannot contradict universal law.
- However, in practice, we know that there is often a much longer period than this before a baptism takes place.
- Particular factors impacting a pastoral decision that wishes to respect Canon Law as well as governmental directives relate to the liturgical dynamics of baptism. Such factors are, of course, issues such as maintaining social distance and sanitizing.

Therefore:

As is happening already, pastors and parish leaders should discuss the situation with the family and assure them that, if the need should arise, anyone may baptize in the case of necessity (see #2 below).

1. During this exceptional time, if there is a very pressing and grave pastoral need for the baptism of an infant to take place, only the necessary rites for a valid Baptism should be celebrated, (CIC, can. 850). Details can be found in the *Order of Baptism of Children*. Only the minister, infant, parents and godparents should be present (again, social distance, hygiene etc. should be followed as far as possible within the liturgy). Please contact one of the Vicars General if you believe that you have such a very pressing and grave pastoral need.
2. In the case of an emergency, anyone may baptize as long as the pouring of water and the valid Trinitarian formula: "N. I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" is used (CIC, can. 861, section 2, and *Order for the Baptism of Children*).
3. In whatever way and wherever the sacrament is celebrated, a proper record should be kept and it must be recorded in the appropriate place (the parish within which the baptism took place: CIC, can. 877)
4. If a baptism is celebrated without the pastor being present, he should be notified, so that the necessary record can be made in the parish register (CIC, can. 878).

With the express approval of Bishop Scharfenberger, given at the Chancery: March 23, 2020



*We are God's people sharing a responsibility to witness God's unconditional love
and to bring Christ's healing presence to our world.*