

ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ALBANY
LITURGICAL GUIDELINES FOR HOLY WEEK & THE SACRED TRIDUUM

22nd February 2021

Every prayer and blessing as we continue our journey through Lent. As with past updates, the guidelines and information below assume that the already existing Diocesan Guidelines and Liturgical Updates are and will be followed. Please note in particular, the updates issued on 12th January 2021. Therefore, the guidelines and information below are an expansion of those updates, especially for Holy Week, the Sacred Triduum, and Easter. Many thanks to those who kindly submitted various thoughts and ideas regarding Guidelines and Updates.

On 17th February 2021, the Congregation for the Sacred Liturgy and Divine Worship issued a “Note to Bishops and Episcopal Conferences on the Celebration of Holy Week 2021.” The Note comments on the very diverse situation worldwide in terms of the pandemic. As the Note states, “many countries still have strict lockdown conditions in force, rendering it impossible for the faithful to be present in church, while in others a more normal pattern of worship is being resumed.” Therefore, on the one hand, the Guidelines issued last year for Holy Week 2020 are “still valid.” However, on the other hand, and as the Note observes:

“the Bishop, as moderator of the liturgical life of his church, is called upon to make prudent decisions in order that the liturgy can be celebrated fruitfully for the People of God and for the good of souls entrusted to his care, while respecting the safeguarding of both health and what has been prescribed by the authorities responsible for the common good.”

With these considerations in mind (that is our current and probable near future situation here in upstate New York, and the balancing of health concerns/protocols with the importance of living and expressing our faith and discipleship in the liturgy), the following Guidelines are given for the Diocese of Albany. As mentioned above, most of these Guidelines were given in the 12th January 2021 Update, but some additional material has also been included.

The RCIA in general and Initiation at the Vigil.

- The Guidelines published during the time of reopening last year contain useful information about the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation in our current situation (see especially 29th June: section on Baptisms). NOTE: these Guidelines and Updates are still available on the Diocesan portal. Additionally, the planning documents sent out to parishes before Confirmations also give guidance as to how the Sacrament of Confirmation should be celebrated (again, these are available on the Diocesan portal). To assist, these various instructions are collated as an Appendix to this document.
- Last year, the Bishop gave a special permission for some of the Scrutinies to be omitted. Given our improved situation, the Scrutinies and other elements pertaining to the RCIA such as the Presentations, should be celebrated.

Holy Week, the Sacred Triduum and Easter.

More general details are given in the Diocesan 2021 Lent/Holy Week and Easter Guidelines (available on the Diocesan Portal, Prayer and Worship Section). Again, please note that any of these guidelines may well still change and be updated due to developing conditions with the pandemic. Given the complex nature of the various liturgies, it would be good for parish leaders and others involved with those liturgies, to refresh their knowledge of the various Diocesan Liturgical Guidelines issued during the pandemic, that would apply to any liturgy (for example: sanitizing, seating capacity, processions, gatherings, the number of people/ministers on the sanctuary etc.) A few summary points are provided below to assist with planning:

- A. Palm Sunday.** It is strongly recommended that Form One is not used, as this involves the gathering of people in a space and then a procession to the church that may involve difficulties in social distancing etc. Therefore, the Second Form is strongly recommended, but *only* where the given procession of ministers can be conducted in observance of the various health protocols. Where this is not possible, the Third Form should be used.

For more details on the three forms please see: Roman Missal, Third Edition, Palm Sunday, The Commemoration of the Lord's Entrance into Jerusalem, nn. 1-18.

Whatever form is used, palms should not be left on a table for people to pick up or touch, but rather, the unblessed palms must be handed out to individuals by the ushers/hospitality ministers (those ministers having sanitized their hands beforehand).

- B. The Chrism Mass.** At present, the Chrism Mass is scheduled to take place at the Cathedral on **Tuesday, 30th March at 7.00 pm** (NOTE the day and date). As noted in the updates of 12th January and 2nd February 2021, the Chrism Mass will be celebrated, but with a very limited number of people present (simply those exercising a liturgical ministry). Each Vicariate is asked to send one priest representative (either the Episcopal Vicar or another priest). The representative will also collect the oils for the Vicariate from the Chrism Mass and these will then be distributed in the Vicariate. The Chrism Mass will be live-streamed.

- C. Holy Thursday, the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper.**

The Mandatum or Washing of Feet. This is, of course, an option in the Roman Missal (cf. Roman Missal, Third Edition, Thursday of the Lord's Supper, n. 10). Given the current circumstances and the difficulties of prudently maintaining health protocols, regrettably this liturgical action should be omitted.

The Transfer of the Most Blessed Sacrament (Roman Missal, Third Edition, Thursday of the Lord's Supper, nn. 37-44). Wherever possible, this should take place as usual. Parish leaders should, of course, plan the liturgical actions carefully, so that a procession can take place safely (bearing in mind health protocols) and that the altar of repose is also situated in a place of safety (observing social distancing, capacity etc.) for those who wish to visit and pray.

D. Good Friday, the Celebration of the Passion of the Lord. The Roman Missal notes that the reverencing of the cross may take the form of some “sign appropriate to the usage of the region” (cf. The Roman Missal, the Celebration of the Passion of the Lord, n. 18). The cross should not be kissed, but people may come forward and bow or genuflect. Similar arrangements as with people coming forward to receive Holy Communion during the Mass could be followed, to ensure an orderly and safe veneration of the cross.

However, if there are too many concerns about celebrating the Adoration of the Cross in this form, the priest may also hold up the cross for a brief time and invite the people to adore the Holy Cross (cf. Roman Missal, the Celebration of the Passion of the Lord, n. 19).

Holy Communion may be distributed in the usual way.

E. The Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday. Various recommendations are made below with respect to the parts of the Vigil that may raise some health protocol questions:

Part One of the Vigil: the Lucernarium

If the people are to hold candles, ensure that the ushers/greeters hand these out (rather than leaving the candles on a table).

A gathering of people outside the church at an Easter fire is not recommended. There may be issues about maintaining distance, as well as the logistics of entering the church and finding seats. Fortunately, the Roman Missal makes provision for this part of the Mass to be “adapted”; that is conducted inside the church (where safe and practical!) with the people already in place within the church (cf. Roman Missal, The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night, n. 13).

As with the general Diocesan Reopening/Liturgical Guidelines or Updates, ensure that a procession can occur following health/reopening protocols.

Part Two of the Vigil: The Liturgy of the Word

It is strongly recommended that when choosing the number of readers, that consideration be given to maintaining the various health/reopening protocols (for example, social distancing and the capacity of the sanctuary in terms of the number of people present there).

Part Three of the Vigil: The Baptismal Liturgy

The Baptismal Liturgy may proceed in the usual way (bearing in mind the health/reopening protocols).

As noted, the Diocesan Reopening Guidelines, for example those issued on 29th June 2020, give some instructions with respect to the celebration of baptisms that can be applied to and adapted for to the Vigil, and the Diocesan Confirmation Guidelines, issued by the Bishop’s office, similarly can assist with planning this part of the Mass. All these documents can be found on the Diocesan Portal (Prayer and Worship). See also Appendix A

Many people desire to take **Holy Water** home with them. It is suggested that they bring water in a suitable container that will then be blessed during the Vigil.

Some Useful Resources:

CDWDS *Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts* (1988)

The various Diocesan Coronavirus Liturgical Guidelines and Updates still in force

Huck, G. *The Three Days. Parish Prayer in the Paschal Triduum* (Chicago: LTP 1992)

Turner, P. *Glory in the Cross. Holy Week in the Third Edition of the Roman Missal*
(Collegeville, MN.: Liturgical Press/Pueblo Books 2011)

In conclusion, we all have fresh memories of how the Sacred Triduum and Easter had to be celebrated last year during the lockdown. Please God, this year, we will be able to celebrate these liturgies that are at the very heart of the liturgical year and of our faith, safely, reverently and with great joy. As the opening instruction of the Easter Vigil says:

“If we keep the memorial of the Lord’s paschal solemnity in this way, listening to his word and celebrating his mysteries, then we shall have the sure hope of sharing his triumph over death and living with him in God.”

APPENDIX A

BAPTISMS:

If possible, only one baptism should take place at any celebration; but, of course, this may not be feasible, or indeed desirable, if, for example, there are a number of candidates for baptism at the Easter Vigil

Therefore, where this is not possible, the greatest care should be taken to avoid the possibility of transmitting the virus. In such cases, extra thought must be given to the objects or vessels that will be used, as well as how the baptismal water would be treated.

If baptisms are usually given by immersion, then the logistics of maintaining health protocols are, of course, particularly challenging. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that some form of pouring of the water (perhaps from another/separate container or containers for each candidate) be employed. The water in the font could be blessed in the usual way, and then the individual containers (such as a pitcher) could be used to baptize each person.

Only the priest administering the sacrament should handle any objects or vessels, and any anointings may be carried out using a swab.

CONFIRMATIONS:

Please note the usual canonical requirements regarding the necessary delegations for priests to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation.

A reminder that the usual provisions of canon law, faculties and delegation still apply, especially regarding the sacrament of Confirmation (cf. Code of Canon Law, in particular, canons 883 and 887). Upon baptizing a person who is no longer an infant or admitting a baptized non-Catholic who is not an infant into full communion with the Catholic Church, a priest possesses the faculty to confirm that person (CIC, canon 883, 2²; RCIA, nfi. 14, 232). However, relative to those baptized in the Catholic Church who lapsed or who were not confirmed for some reason, the Confirmation of these persons by a priest requires for validity a specific concession of the faculty to confirm by the Bishop. For details on the process, including the form to request from me the faculty to administer Confirmation, please refer to the Office of Prayer & Worship page of our Diocesan portal, where you can access the document, "2021 Guidelines for Lent, Holy Week and Easter."

As the actual Rite begins and, as space allows (respecting social distancing), the candidates and their sponsor should gather so that the Prayer over the Candidates can be said over them by the priest.

For the anointing, the candidates (NOT sponsors) may remove their mask when they approach to receive the Sacrament. If there are a number of candidates, the usual protocol of social distancing is to be maintained.

The candidate will be anointed in the usual way, but by using some instrument such as a cotton ball/bud.

Note: a smaller vessel containing the Sacred Chrism should be prepared. After the ceremony, the remaining Chrism should be appropriately and reverently disposed of and the container washed with soap and water. Suggestion: use a suitable container and add some cotton buds. The Chrism can be poured on to the cotton buds.

If there are a number of candidates, as the priest finishes with one candidate and that candidate has moved away, the next candidate comes forward and stands before the priest (to maintain distancing). Sponsors place their right hand on the candidate's right shoulder in the usual way.

With each candidate, after the anointing, the priest will then say "peace be with you" and the newly confirmed will respond; but there will be no physical contact.

On the way back to their place, or as soon as possible, the newly confirmed person places their mask back on if they have removed it.