

## Diocese of Scranton

# Directives for the Private Liturgies of Holy Week 2020

---

On Monday, March 16, 2020, Bishop Bambera suspended the celebration of Masses that are open to the public and all public gatherings in parishes and worship sites in the Diocese of Scranton until further notice. While priests are directed to continue offering private, non-public Masses for the People of God and for the intention of the day, there have been additional concerns raised regarding the private celebration of Holy Week liturgies. The following guidelines are offered for Holy Week liturgies that are celebrated privately and for Holy Week liturgies that are celebrated privately but are live-streamed or recorded for online viewing. A private Mass is offered by the priest only with one other person present, preferably a deacon, acting as the server and reader. Masses that are live-streamed or recorded could even include an organist or cantor. Since many Catholics typically visit churches for private prayer during this week and especially on Good Friday, pastors and parish life coordinators are strongly advised to monitor potential crowds in churches and to display signage reminding people about current health precautions and social distancing guidelines. Given the evolving directions from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), these guidelines regarding access to our churches by the faithful for private prayer may need to be modified in the future.

### FRIDAY ABSTINENCE

Bishop Bambera has granted a dispensation from the obligation to abstain from meat for this Friday, March 27, 2020 and next Friday, April 4, 2020. The obligation of fasting and abstinence still applies on Good Friday, April 10, 2020.

### PERFECT CONTRITION

With the increasing difficulty for individuals to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation due to the current health crisis, the faithful of the Diocese of Scranton are reminded that by having *perfect contrition* one can receive the forgiveness of sins, apart from going to confession.

*Perfect contrition* requires the following three things:

- A love of God above all else
- A sincere desire for the forgiveness from sin
- The resolution to go to confession as soon as possible when this health crisis subsides

### PLENARY INDULGENCE

His Holiness, Pope Francis, has also granted a *plenary indulgence* under specific conditions.

The faithful who qualify for a *plenary indulgence* during the coronavirus pandemic:

- Those suffering from the coronavirus illness
- Health care workers, family members, and others caring for those with the coronavirus (exposing themselves to the virus)

The faithful must do at least one of the following:

- Unite yourself spiritually through the media in the celebration of the Holy Mass
- Recite the Rosary
- Pious practice of the Way of the Cross (or other forms of devotion)
- Recite the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and a Hail Mary

The faithful must be willing to perform all of the following as soon as possible: (considered the three usual conditions for a plenary indulgence)

- Going to Confession
- Receiving Holy Communion
- Praying for the intentions of Pope Francis

## **PALM SUNDAY**

- If the Palm Sunday liturgy is live-streamed/recorded, it is recommended that the second form of the entrance (Solemn Entrance) with the Blessing of the Palm and reading of the Gospel of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem be used.
- If the priest is celebrating Mass privately, the third form of entrance (Simple Entrance) without the blessing of palm branches should be used.
- If they have already been ordered by the parish and pastors or parish life coordinators are so inclined, palm branches that are blessed could be made available to the faithful at the doors of the church or in the church vestibule for those who visit for private prayer.

## **CHRISM MASS**

- The Chrism Mass is postponed to a later date.
- Priests are instructed to continue using last year's holy oils until the new oils have been blessed and consecrated. If a priest is in need of more of last year's holy oil, please contact David Baloga (see contact information below).
- Pastors and parish life coordinators are reminded to return their reply cards indicating how many bottles of holy oil they need.

## **HOLY THURSDAY – EVENING MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER**

- Whether offered privately or live-streamed, there is to be no Washing of the Feet ritual.
- There is to be no solemn public adoration of the Blessed Sacrament after the Mass.
- Since there is no solemn public adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Mass concludes in the usual way with Blessed Sacrament placed in the regular tabernacle.
- The altar is stripped following the Holy Thursday liturgy.

## **GOOD FRIDAY – COMMEMORATION OF THE LORD'S PASSION**

- The Commemoration of the Lord's Passion is to be celebrated in parish churches if at all possible.
- A special petition for the pandemic is to be included in the Solemn Intercessions (please see email attachment—a chant setting can be found on the [diocesan website](#) under Parish Life/Worship).
- If live-streaming or recording the service, consider spending some time with the camera focused on the cross during the Adoration of the Holy Cross for the personal veneration of the faithful watching.
- Given current CDC regulations, Cross Walks and Living Stations are prohibited.
- The cross used for the liturgy should not be accessible for individual acts of veneration (such as touching or kissing the cross) by anyone visiting the church for personal prayer.

## **HOLY SATURDAY – EASTER VIGIL**

- The Easter Vigil should not be celebrated privately without another person. It may be live-streamed for the faithful.
- If celebrated, it must begin after sunset.
- The Blessing of the Fire, Preparation of the Candle and Procession during the Solemn Beginning of the Vigil are omitted. The liturgy begins with the Paschal Candle being lit followed by the Easter Proclamation (Exsultet) and then the Liturgy of the Word. For the Baptismal Liturgy, the Litany of the Saints is omitted, and only the Renewal of Baptismal Promises is necessary. The Sprinkling with Holy Water is to be omitted. The Liturgy of the Eucharist then follows.

- Regarding Catechumens and Candidates: the celebrations of the Sacraments of Initiation and the Reception into Full Communion with the Catholic Church are to be postponed until a later date.

#### **EASTER SUNDAY**

- For private Masses with a priest alone, the Renewal of Baptismal Promises would be omitted.
- The Sprinkling with Holy Water is to be omitted as a health precaution.
- Easter water blessed at the Easter Vigil is not to be made available to the faithful at this time.

#### **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- Since churches will be open for private prayer, it would be proper and appropriate to decorate for Easter in a simple way if the process can be done without bringing together a large group of parishioners.
- There are to be no parish Easter basket blessings. Pastors and parish life coordinators are encouraged to offer parishioners resources for prayer and a blessing of Easter foods which can be found on the [diocesan website](#) (under Parish Life) or in the *Book of Blessings* #1701-1723.
- Because some of the faithful may still try to attend these private liturgies of Holy Week and Easter, church doors must be locked and signs posted stating that because of the current health crisis these liturgies as well as the traditional period of adoration following the Holy Thursday liturgy are not open to the public.

*If you have any questions or concerns regarding any of these directives or any other issues regarding the private celebration of the Holy Week liturgies, please contact David Baloga, Director for Worship, at 570-207-2213, ext. 1158 or at [David-Baloga@dioceseofscranton.org](mailto:David-Baloga@dioceseofscranton.org).*