



CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF ENGLAND AND WALES

Vade Mecum for Holy Week 2021

General Principles

This year, the Celebrations for Holy Week and the Sacred Triduum will be in the presence of Christ's faithful. This differs from the situation faced last year when acts of public worship were suspended because of the covid-19 pandemic.

The Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments has issued a *Note* (Prot. N. 96/21 – 17 February 2021) to assist the Bishops in their task of “judging concrete situation and providing for the spiritual welfare of pastors and faithful in living this great Week of the liturgical year.”

The *Note* stresses that whilst the use of social media has greatly enhanced the participation of the faithful during the pandemic, there should be a focus on the media coverage of liturgies presided over by the Diocesan Bishop so that those who are “unable to attend their own church [should] follow the diocesan celebrations as a sign of unity.” Thus the times of the Cathedral celebrations of the Sacred Triduum should be promoted in each of the Dioceses of England and Wales alongside the local parochial celebrations. The *Liturgy of the Hours* should be promoted by parish priests to the faithful who are unable to attend the local church as an additional means of uniting themselves in prayer to the worship of the Universal Church.

The *Note* states that the Decree issued by the Congregation last year (Prot. N. 153/20) is still valid for this year's celebrations. The contents of this have been incorporated into the Guidance given below.

The theological meaning found through the celebrations of Holy Week with their richness of sign and symbol have to be tempered by the provision that the Church in England and Wales is part of a broader community in which the possibilities of virus transmission are still high. Therefore the general guidance for the safety of those participating in acts of worship have to be strictly adhered to. These include:

- The wearing of face coverings in church by the faithful (unless the person has a valid exemption from this regulation)
- Social distancing of people within the church building
- Stewarding of the church premises to assist the faithful whilst in church
- Frequent hand cleansing, either with sanitiser or washing
- Suitable one-way systems in the building to prevent excessive interaction between people from different households or bubbles

- Good ventilation of the church building to refresh the air quality within
- Cleaning of the church building after each act of public worship
- The timely dispersing of the faithful after the acts of worship avoiding congregating in car parks or on the streets outside the church.

Consideration should also be given to the times of the liturgical celebrations so that those who have to travel via public transport to the local church are doing so in periods where there is less congestion on these services.

Because of the nature of the Holy Week Liturgies, a small number of ministers to assist the priest is permitted. These should be chosen so that a minimum number of assistants are present in the sanctuary during the liturgies.

The celebrations of the various liturgies of Holy Week should include those things that are necessary for the celebration, but not be prolonged in any way. In particular, those responsible for the planning of the liturgy should take into account:

- The time that people will be within the church buildings; the tension between a dignified celebration and the time to execute that celebration has to be recognised.
- The use of choirs and music has to be taken into consideration as a prolonging factor in this case, remembering that congregational singing is not permitted.
- The movement of people within the church building itself as a potential risk factor.

Specific Guidance for the Celebrations of Holy Week

Palm Sunday

The Commemoration of the Lord's Entrance into Jerusalem should be celebrated within the church buildings and not outside. The *Procession* should not take place and the *Second Form: The Solemn Entrance* should be used. The ministers should enter into the Church at a suitable place where the palm branches to be blessed are provided. These should be blessed at the appropriate point and the Gospel of the Lord's Entry into Jerusalem is proclaimed. After the Gospel, the ministers move to the Sanctuary and the Mass continues with the *Collect*.

The shorter form of the Passion from the Gospel of St Mark should be read in a dignified yet expeditious manner with or without multiple readers. The *turba* parts should not be exclaimed by the congregation.

The palm branches blessed during the celebration of the liturgy should be distributed to the faithful as they leave the church after Mass. Those distributing the palm branches should wear single-use gloves when doing so.

The Chrism Mass

If the Chrism Mass is not deferred to a later date, then this should take place in the Cathedral Church of the Diocese (or in another church adept for the purpose). Those who participate

in the Chrism Mass should represent the life of the diocese, in the first place and foremost with a good representation of the diocesan presbyterate, but also recognising the role of the religious and lay faithful. The conditions for social distancing for those participating must be a prime consideration as the celebration of the Chrism Mass is universally popular.

A number of priests (preferably from different regions of the diocese) should concelebrate with the Bishop; others may participate in choir. The concelebrants should receive communion by intinction with care to ensure the bread and wine to be consecrated is covered until reception. Those participating in choir may receive communion only under one kind, in the same manner as the faithful.

The *Renewal of Priestly Promises* should take place at the usual point in the Mass. Those priests who are unable to attend should be encouraged to participate in the Mass, and particularly in this act of renewal, from their homes via electronic means.

The distribution of the Holy Oils and the Sacred Chrism to the priests of the diocese needs particular consideration which should take place at the diocesan level.

Mass of the Lord's Supper

In the Decree of March 2020, the exceptional faculty to celebrate this Mass without the faithful was granted to all priests on this day, and it is assumed via the *Note* of 2021 that this is still permitted. However, the celebration of the Mass of the Lord's Supper finds its fullest expression with a congregation.

The *Washing of the Feet* is to be omitted and there is to be no procession to the Altar of Repose. The Reserved Sacrament is to be kept in the Tabernacle of the church. Those who are not able to celebrate this Mass should pray *Vespers* from the *Liturgy of the Hours*. The altar should not be stripped in the usual manner, and most certainly not if the Blessed Sacrament is reserved at that altar.

Holy Communion should be given under one kind according the previous *Guidance* offered by the Bishops' Conference.

The priest and ministers may wish to spend some time in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle before exiting the sanctuary. For reasons of safety, *Watching* in lieu of the Altar of Repose is not possible this year.

Good Friday

The Celebration of the Passion of the Lord should take place in the church with a congregation wherever possible. Sufficient ministers should be prepared to assist in this liturgy. Care should be taken for the numbers of people present for this liturgy which is very popular with the faithful. If necessary, additional celebrations can be considered, taking into account the risks associated for the faithful in travelling to and from church.

The proclamation of the Passion according to St John should be read in a dignified yet expeditious manner with or without multiple readers. The *turba* parts should not be exclaimed by the congregation.

The Universal Prayer should be carried out without undue delay. Like last year, a special intention (*For the afflicted in time of Pandemic*) is to be inserted before the intercession *For those in Tribulation (X)*. This prayer is circulated with this document in Appendix 1.

For *The Adoration of the Holy Cross*, the Cross can either be veiled or unveiled according to whether the first or second form of the *Showing* is used. It may be expedient to use the second form for ease. For the *Adoration*, the Veneration of the Cross is limited to the celebrant alone. After he has done this, he should “invite the people present 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.” (Rubrics #19). This may be expressed by the faithful through a short period of silent prayer, a gesture such as a genuflection or bow in their places, followed by another short period of silent prayer.

Holy Communion should be given under one kind from the Reserved Sacrament according the previous *Guidance* offered by the Bishops’ Conference.

Other Celebrations on Good Friday

The provision of other devotions on Good Friday may mitigate against the numbers which could congregate in parish churches for the singular celebration of the *Liturgy of the Lord’s Passion*. Celebrations of the *Stations of the Cross* should not involve the moving of the congregation on pilgrimage around the church. The celebrant should move from Station to Station with the people remaining in their places. *Walks of Witness* should not take place. Outdoor congregations for Witness Services (which are often the culmination of a Walk of Witness) must take into account the requirements for permission by the civil authorities if this is not to take place within the boundaries of a place of worship. Government Guidance for social distancing, outdoor singing (if this is to take place) and non-returnable service sheets must also be adhered.

It is recommended that at all acts of worship on Good Friday in the churches of England and Wales, the opportunity for the faithful to contribute to the Holy See collection for the *Holy Places of Palestine* should be available.

The Easter Vigil

This should be celebrated in Cathedrals and Parish Churches only. If a priest is unable to celebrate the Easter Vigil, he should pray the prescribed *Office of Readings* for Easter Day noting the number of readings, chants and prayers to be used.

For the celebration of the Easter Vigil, the Paschal candle should be prepared, enthroned and lit in the Sanctuary before the people gather in the church, or simply lit at the beginning of the celebration. The ministers should process in silence to the sanctuary where the

Celebrant begins the celebration with the Sign of the Cross and the Greeting, *Dear brothers and sisters, on this most sacred night...* At the end of the Greeting, the Easter Proclamation (the *Exsultet*) immediately follows, preferably using the Shorter Form. This is either said or sung by a single voice. The faithful should not have votive candles for the Easter Vigil.

The Liturgy of the Word follows. In order to expedite the liturgy in a dignified way, it is recommended that two Old Testament readings from both the Law and the Prophets with their respective psalms, in addition to the reading of Exodus 14 and its canticle (which may never be omitted) are used (Rubrics, #21). The homily, after the proclamation of the Gospel, is not to be omitted, but is to be brief (Rubrics, #36)

The Baptism of Catechumens, the Reception of other Christians into full Communion with the Catholic Church and the Confirmation is not recommended at the Easter Vigil but should take place at another time. The celebrant should bless the baptismal water in the font or in a suitable receptacle in the sanctuary. The Renewal of Baptismal Promises should be made by those present, but the celebrant should not sprinkle the faithful, nor should the holy water stoups be refilled.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist follows. Holy Communion should be given under one kind from the newly consecrated Sacrament according the previous *Guidance* offered by the Bishops' Conference.

Mass of Easter Day

All priests should endeavour to celebrate Mass for their people on Easter Sunday. The Mass should be as prescribed in the *Roman Missal* but without the sprinkling of water as part of the Renewal of Baptismal Promises.

Rev. Canon Christopher Thomas

28th February 2021

FINAL

Appendix 1

FRIDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

The Solemn Intercessions

IX b. For the afflicted in time of pandemic

Let us pray also for all those who suffer the consequences of the current pandemic, that God the Father may grant health to the sick, strength to those who care for them, comfort to families and salvation to all the victims who have died.

Prayer in silence. Then the Priest says:

Almighty ever-living God,
only support of our human weakness,
look with compassion upon the sorrowful condition of your children
who suffer because of this pandemic;
relieve the pain of the sick,
give strength to those who care for them,
welcome into your peace those who have died
and, throughout this time of tribulation,
grant that we may all find comfort in your merciful love.
Through Christ our Lord.

R/. Amen.