

## NOTES ON HOLY WEEK LITURGIES 2021

*(The notes presented here are adapted from advice from the Irish Episcopal Conference Council for Liturgy)*

On 17 February 2021, the Congregation for Divine Worship published a *Note to Bishops* (Prot N 96/21). No new indications for 2021 were given there, however it confirmed that the liturgical advices given for last year are still valid (*Decree in Time of Covid-19* Prot N 153/20 and *Decree in Time of Covid-19 II* Prot N 154/20). The main advice is:

The norms and directives contained in the liturgical books, drawn up with normal times in view, are not entirely applicable in exceptional moments of crisis such as these. For this reason, 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 the souls entrusted to his care, while respecting the safeguarding of health and what has been prescribed by the authorities responsible for the common good.

*Note to Bishops (17-2-2021)*

If liturgies are to be broadcast it is advisable that the celebrant be accompanied by other ministers. A cantor and organist (or other instrumentalist) is allowed, as is a Lector and (adult) server. A deacon may also participate as well as someone to operate the cameras and a sacristan. All of these are engaged in "necessary work." But numbers ought to be kept to a minimum. Additionally, extreme care must be taken to be socially distant in the church. Masks must be worn, except by whomever is speaking or singing in that moment (and that person should not have anyone else close to them when their mask is off). Care must also be taken to avoid sharing books (Lectionaries, Missals, liturgical folders etc.) and even the same pulpit or lectern [*avoid touching microphones and use disinfectant wipes*]. Cantors in particular should be at a safe distance from others.

The guidelines advise for a minimum of processions. There is no need for the washing of the feet on Holy Thursday (which is an optional rite). If palms or holy water are blessed, extreme care is to be taken in their eventual distribution.

Regarding the blessing Chrism and Holy Oils: these need to be preserved “diligently with proper care.” While normally priests should use oil that has been “consecrated or blessed recently by a bishop,” he may use “old oils” when it is “necessary” (see Canon 847). The current pandemic is clearly a situation that might render it “necessary” to use old oils (i.e. those blessed or consecrated in the Chrism Mass of 2019). If a diocese or a parish has extra oils or old oils that they no longer need, these must be disposed of reverently. Number 1127 of the *Book of Blessings* states that: “Each year when the bishop blesses the oils and consecrates the chrism, the pastor should see that the old oils are properly disposed of by burning and that they are replaced by the newly blessed oils.” Olive oil is difficult to burn, but it may be soaked into cotton balls and burned. Otherwise, it could be reverently stored until the Easter Vigil of 2022 to burn in the Paschal Fire that year (there is no Paschal Fire this year, even in places that can celebrate the Easter Vigil with an assembly present. [*At the Easter Vigil, to light the Paschal Candle, a light can be taken from the sanctuary lamp that has been burning beside the reserved Blessed Sacrament since the Lord’s Supper*]).

Alternatively, some places have the tradition of burying the old oils in the ground. This can take place in the church grounds or in a Catholic cemetery. This is the most eco-friendly manner of disposing of old oils. However, care must be taken that the oils do not remain on top of the ground and if any quantity of oil is to be disposed of, it is recommended that they be buried in a hole at least a foot deep, as oil can bubble up to the surface of the ground and become a hazard, in addition to the fact that it is not being disposed of worthily. It is not allowed to simply to dispose of holy oils in the regular rubbish bin.

Those involved with the preparation and celebration of the Holy Week liturgies should consult the compiled resources for Holy Week, the Easter Triduum and Easter from different dioceses of Ireland collated by a working group from the National Centre for Liturgy. These have been forwarded to you already but are also available on the Centre’s website:

<http://www.liturgy-ireland.ie>

**Extracts from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments NOTE TO BISHOPS AND EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES ON THE CELEBRATION OF HOLY WEEK 2021 (17 February 2021)**

We are still facing the drama of the COVID-19 pandemic which has brought many changes, even to our normal way of celebrating the liturgy. The norms and directives contained in the liturgical books, drawn up with normal times in view, are not entirely applicable in exceptional moments of crisis such as these. For this reason, 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 the souls entrusted to his care, while respecting the safeguarding of health and what has been prescribed by the authorities responsible for the common good.

Once again we remind Bishops of the Decree issued by this Dicastery by mandate of the Holy Father on 25 March 2020 (Prot. N. 154/20) in which some guidelines were offered for the celebration of Holy Week. That statement is also valid this year.

- The use of social media has greatly aided pastors in offering support and closeness to their communities during the pandemic. Alongside these positive results problematic aspects were also observed. For the celebration of Holy Week it is suggested that media coverage of the celebrations presided over by the Bishop be facilitated and favoured, encouraging the faithful who are unable to attend their own church to follow the diocesan celebrations as a sign of unity.
- In all celebrations, in conjunction with the Episcopal Conference, attention should be paid to some particular moments and gestures, in accordance with healthcare requirements (cf. Letter of the Cardinal Prefect to the Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences *Let us return to the Eucharist with joy!*, 15 August 2020, Prot. N. 432/20).
- The Chrism Mass can be moved to another more suitable day, if necessary; a significant representation of pastors, ministers and faithful should participate.
- For the celebration of Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil the indications given last year are valid.

- The preparation of suitable aids for family and personal prayer is encouraged, also by making use of some parts of the *Liturgy of the Hours*.

The Congregation sincerely thanks Bishops and Episcopal Conferences for responding in a pastoral manner to a rapidly changing situation over the course of the year. We are aware that the decisions taken have not always been easy for pastors or the lay faithful to accept. However, we know that they were taken with a view to ensuring that the sacred mysteries be celebrated in the most effective way possible for our communities, while respecting the common good and public health.

### **Extracts from the CDWDS DECREE (25 March 2020)**

In time of Covid-19 (II)

Bishops and priests may celebrate the rites of Holy Week without the presence of the people and in a suitable place, avoiding concelebration and omitting the sign of peace.

The faithful should be informed of the beginning times of the celebrations so that they can prayerfully unite themselves in their homes. Means of live (not recorded) telematic broadcasts can be of help. In any event it remains important to dedicate an adequate time to prayer, giving importance above all to the *Liturgy of the Hours*.

The Episcopal Conferences and individual dioceses will see to it that resources are provided to support family and personal prayer.

**Palm Sunday.** The Commemoration of the Lord's Entrance into Jerusalem is to be celebrated within sacred buildings; in Cathedral churches the second form given in the Roman Missal is to be adopted; in parish churches and in other places the third form is to be used.

[i.e. Therefore: simple entrance. Begin "Dear brothers and sisters" p 132 of the missal, Blessing of Palms, The Gospel of the entry into Jerusalem, then into "Let us pray: Collect on page 143]

**Holy Thursday.** The washing of feet, which is already optional, is to be omitted. At the end of the Mass of the Lord's Supper the procession is also

omitted and the Blessed Sacrament is to be kept in the tabernacle. On this day the faculty to celebrate Mass in a suitable place, without the presence of the people, is exceptionally granted to all priests.

**Good Friday.** In the Universal Prayer, Bishops will arrange to have a special intention prepared for those who find themselves in distress, the sick, the dead, (cf. *Missale Romanum*). The adoration of the Cross by kissing it shall be limited solely to the celebrant.

**The Easter Vigil:** Is to be celebrated only in Cathedral and parish churches. For the “Baptismal Liturgy” only the “Renewal of Baptismal Promises” is maintained (cf. *Missale Romanum*).

Seminaries, houses of clergy, monasteries and religious communities shall follow the indications of this decree.