

COVID SAFE GUIDELINES - HOLY WEEK 2021

Dear Bishops, Priests and Deacons

This year we will be able to celebrate Holy Week almost “normally” – provided we maintain the appropriate Covid-safe requirements – typically, the limit indoors of 1 person per 2m² (given the space of the entire building, not simply the area for the pews), no congregational singing (except in the circumstances noted below), hand sanitizing and registering of attendees.

With the assistance of Fr Don Richardson we have developed the following more detailed directives for the individual liturgies.

PALM SUNDAY

The full Commemoration of the Lord’s entry into Jerusalem, with procession, should be celebrated at least at the principal Mass – noting that if the Mass is celebrated outdoors, up to 500 people are permitted. If the Mass is to be celebrated indoors, then the limit on numbers in the procession will be determined by the number permitted in the church or hall (by 2m² rule). (i.e. we cannot have more people in the procession than would be permitted in the church.)

QR code/registration is required of participants, Covid-safety marshals should be in attendance, etc.

Palm branches may be made available for the faithful to take from a receptacle, rather than being handed out by a minister. Branches should not be handed from person to person, and must be taken home after Mass. The faithful should be reminded to maintain social distancing during the procession. There may be congregational singing in the procession outdoors, but it must cease when people enter the church. (While congregational singing is permitted indoors, the requirements that those over twelve years of age wear masks and that numbers are limited by the 4m² means that congregational singing will not be feasible in most churches. (It is more important that more people can participate, than that they be allowed to sing!)

Branches which have been distributed should not be collected for “re-use” at another Mass; they should be reverently disposed of.

HOLY THURSDAY – Mass of the Lord’s Supper

The Washing of Feet may be performed in a Covid-safe way: e.g. the priest, ministers and participants in the Washing of Feet may prefer to wear masks; the priest pours clean water from a jug onto the feet without touching the feet; a separate container is used for each person to receive the water that has been poured over their feet; the priest is careful not to touch the feet when drying them, and a fresh towel is used for each person. While 12 is the traditional number, it may be appropriate to wash the feet of a smaller number of people – what matters most is the symbolism of Christ’s servant love for all.

Distribution of Holy Communion from the Chalice is still suspended. Reception of the Host on the hand rather than on the tongue is still strongly recommended.

The Procession to the Altar of Repose will normally be appropriate, maintaining social distancing, along with the usual extended period of prayer at the Altar of Repose if desired.

GOOD FRIDAY – Celebration of the Passion of the Lord

The Stations of the Cross can easily be celebrated in a Covid-safe way, especially if this is done outdoors.

In the afternoon Liturgy, the additional Solemn Intercession added by the Holy See last year should be included this year also:

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

At the Adoration of the Holy Cross, only the Celebrant should kiss the Cross. To minimise the risk of transmission of coronavirus, all others may venerate the Cross by a genuflection or bow, but not by touching it.

Holy Communion is given in accordance with the current Covid-safe norms.

HOLY SATURDAY –The Easter Vigil

The Blessing of the Fire and the Lighting of the Easter Candle may take place in the usual manner, with appropriate Covid-safe measures. Candles should not be passed from person to person but taken from a receptacle by each parishioner.

Unlike last year, Baptisms may be performed; anointing should occur using a cotton swab or similar instrument, in the now familiar Covid-safe manner, with care taken to ensure the Baptismal water is not “re-used” from person to person.

The remainder of the Easter Vigil may be celebrated fully, but with the usual Covid-safe procedures at Holy Communion. The blessed Easter Water is NOT put into the Holy Water stoups, which should remain empty. Nevertheless, containers of Easter Water should be made available for the faithful to take home. If it is impractical to make the blessed water available straight after the Easter Vigil, it would be good to provide containers of Easter Water at Masses later on Easter Sunday and throughout the Easter Season, while reserving enough for use for baptisms.

Depending on the time of your Vigil celebration, you may wish to provide an additional Mass later on Saturday night (after the Vigil) – using the liturgy of the Mass on Easter morning.

EASTER SUNDAY

At Masses on Easter Day, the Renewal of Baptismal Promises and sprinkling with Holy Water may take place after the homily, according to the texts used at the Easter Vigil (Roman Missal page 418). In that case the Creed is omitted. Holy water may be made available in the way explained above.

With best wishes for Holy Week and Easter,

Fr Gerry Gleeson
VICAR GENERAL