



Committee on Divine Worship

3211 FOURTH STREET NE · WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 · 202-541-3060 · FAX 202-541-3088

MEMORANDUM

To: All Bishops

From: Most Rev. Leonard P. Blair, Archbishop of Hartford
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Divine Worship

Date: March 21, 2020

Re: Observance of Holy Week in 2020

We can be grateful to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments for a decree dated March 19, 2020 (Prot. N. 153/20) which provides direction for the celebration of the Chrism Mass and the Sacred Triduum during this time of a pandemic. The Decree has been circulated to the bishops and is meant to help them and their priests to adapt to the present circumstances.

The Congregation's Decree states that its purpose is to provide "general indications... along with some suggestions for Bishops." It may be helpful to note that *indicazioni* in the Italian text can be translated as "information, suggestions or advice." The decree also says that the "indications" given by local bishops should be in agreement with the Episcopal Conference. Given the size of our country, the particular situations of our many dioceses, and the measures taken by civil authorities in each, no general consultation among all the bishops of the Conference would appear to be necessary or even feasible. Diocesan bishops can apply the "indications" given by the Congregation according to their prudent judgment.

In light of this, the USCCB Secretariat on Divine Worship wishes to provide the following observations based on what is stated both in the Decree and in the Roman Missal. Other specific questions about celebrating the rites are sure to arise, and the local bishop can work with his clergy to find appropriate solutions.

If the **Chrism Mass** is postponed, it might be helpful to remind priests to continue to use their current oil stocks until new oils have been blessed and consecrated. *Pastoral Care of the Sick* contains provisions for the *ad hoc* blessing of the Oil of the Sick if necessary, and the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* does the same for the blessing of the Oil of Catechumens, should a priest need more of those oils. If the Diocesan bishop does celebrate the Chrism Mass at the usual time, the new oils could be kept for distribution at a later time, but in some cases they might even be distributed to parishes right away.

On **Good Friday** the Roman Missal says that the Diocesan bishop may "permit or order the addition of a special intention" to the Solemn Intercessions. What follows is offered as a sample petition modelled on the liturgical prayers of Good Friday:



Committee on Divine Worship

3211 FOURTH STREET NE · WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 · 202-541-3060 · FAX 202-541-3088

XI. For an end to the pandemic

Let us pray, dearly beloved, for a swift end to the coronavirus pandemic that afflicts our world, that our God and Father will heal the sick, strengthen those who care for them, and help us all to persevere in faith.

Prayer in silence. Then the Priest says:

**Almighty and merciful God,
source of all life, health and healing,
look with compassion on our world, brought low by disease;
protect us in the midst of the grave challenges that assail us
and in your fatherly providence
grant recovery to the stricken,
strength to those who care for them,
and success to those working to eradicate this scourge.
Through Christ our Lord.**

R. Amen.

Also on **Good Friday**, for the Adoration of the Holy Cross it will surely be best, if more than one person is assisting, to express reverence to the Cross without kissing or touching it. A genuflection or profound bow would be appropriate.

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* includes provision for a delay in the celebration of the sacraments. For example, the bishop can dispense from the Scrutinies (n. 20); the bishop can permit an abbreviated form of initiation (nn. 331 ff.); and the rites can be celebrated at other times of the year (nn. 26-30).