

**PASTORAL CARE; SACRAMENTS
HOLY WEEK & EASTER TRIDUUM
Some Guidelines during COVID-19**

Liturgy Commission (Chair: Fr. Geoffrey Young)

Last Rites (Confession, Apostolic Pardon, Anointing and Viaticum) to Hospitals, Care Homes, and the infirmed homebound:

In grave need and in danger of death the priest is to attend to the faithful with prudence and care, both mindful of the physical precautions as well as the care of the soul. All Catholics are to receive Viaticum prior to death (Can. 921 §1) - this 'food for the journey' is indeed foreseen as the right of the faithful and should not be withheld from them in any circumstance. It should not be so delayed such that the person is no longer able to consume the host, or however small a particle thereof.

Along with this ideally the lay faithful - if they are able - are to make a Confession and/or receive the Apostolic Pardon. They may be anointed too prior to viaticum.

In these circumstances of the Pandemic - priests must follow any of the health care directives including if permitted, the gowning up, wearing of a mask and gloves, etc. as proscribed upon entry into a health facility. If they are not given entrance to the facility; this needs to be obeyed.

The following notes for priests are important:

Confession and/or Apostolic Pardon can be done at a safe and notable distance without physical contact. The requirement for validity is that we both physically 'hear' their confession and they 'hear' the absolution and pardon - this therefore can be done over and above the 2-metre distance and even on the other side of a curtain/barrier. Also, this may be done in a general form of absolution if the circumstance requires. If the person is not able to respond, he would proceed from a distance with the absolution and apostolic pardon.

Anointing may be omitted - but if it is to be done the following notes should assist in safely administering this Sacrament and carefully disposing of the sacramentals involved following. The exterior of the oil stock (the metallic container) should be thoroughly sterilised prior to arriving and leaving from each anointing. The priest is to bring with him a burnable and sealable plastic bag/container (e.g. a Ziploc). Using a cotton-ball, the priest dips only once in the stock, seals the stock with his other hand, placing it aside. If outside things cannot be brought in, this needs to be done prior to entry into the room. He anoints using the emergency formula upon the head, then the hands with the accompanying prayers: "Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit... May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up."

Following the rites to be performed, the cotton-ball used with the OI should be placed in the plastic bag - to be burned after by the priest. If these guidelines cannot be followed or the health facility restricts you from physically approaching the body - the Anointing should be omitted.

Viaticum ideally would be celebrated - if the person can receive Holy Communion prior to death. Once again - the same precautions are made as noted above: Follow the guidelines of the hospital.

Communion should only be given on an individual case-by-case basis. It should only be administered during this time for a grave or serious spiritual need - most notably, in danger of death. Again, a single host should be brought for this purpose. The pix (the metallic container) prior needs to be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized (interiorly and exteriorly). Following Communion, it needs to be purified than sanitized again after each use. Do not risk cross contamination by bringing hosts to multiple people from the same pyx.

The priest may use the emergency formula and abbreviated rites in all cases according to his judgment. The presence of family should be restricted and in compliance with the rules of the hospital or Care home - it would be advisable therefore that the Last Rites be celebrated only with the individual soul. Afterwards, the priest may be with the immediate family following the appropriate precautions of gathering in small groups with physical distancing. In individual home visits - it should be restricted to only the one receiving the visit and possibly the spouse if present. The priest is only to go alone, with no outside parishioners or guests.

Items concerning Adoration (w/ or w/o exposition), Confessions, open-air and from a distance:

To summarize some questions that have arisen in the past week(s). Priests and parishes are trying to find creative ways to make visible the Blessed Sacrament for Adoration (from safe distance, even through glass from outside) as well as finding ways to hear confessions (at times from another side of a door etc.).

A few points: Exposition (in a monstrance) along with Adoration is a liturgical rite - and it requires the continual presence of someone there. Even if this means the priest himself remains there - the Blessed Sacrament is not to be left exposed and unattended. The video streaming of exposition and adoration still requires the physical presence of at least the priest or another there. If the priest is to set up a way - safely for the faithful to view the Tabernacle (i.e. not the exposed blessed sacrament) for private prayer and adoration this would be preferable. Keeping in mind there cannot be a gathering at this time of more than 10 people (which may again be restricted). Depending on the layout of the Church - this may be done from the safety of their own car such that there is not contact between those spending time in prayer. To facilitate this - an altar of repose may be set up that could be visible but not accessible in any way from the outside public (i.e. on the otherside of a window or locked doors). This is a temporary altar of repose and likely this should not involve exposition (but the use of a secondary tabernacle) that simply can be viewed in adoration. The Pastor should best determine how this can be done reverently, safely, and practically based on his own facility.

Hearing confessions and the granting of absolution must be physically done (it cannot be done over phone, internet etc.). The distance between the penitent and priest can be safely made through adequate physical distance of 2 metres or more, and this could include also a physical barrier between them (e.g. on the other side of a door, curtain etc.). Each Pastor ought to determine the safest way to fulfill these necessary precautions. Some have suggested the idea of sitting outside for 'open-air' confessions or at the entrance of the church or curbside. Confession never is restricted to the physical Church - so this foreseeably could work going forward with adequate weather. Regardless, the necessary physical distance must be remained - if the penitent can remain in their car as well as - this could be done appropriately. The priest ought to adequately post or notify to other cars and penitents to keep sufficient distance both for prevention of infection but also the privacy and protection of the sacramental seal of confession. All spiritual direction, counselling and other pastoral activities that can be done

over the phone or through video-calls ought to be encouraged to avoid physical interaction unless for the necessities stated above for sacramental validity.

Items concerning Holy Week:

Holy Week liturgies are to be broadcast - with preference given to livestreaming - from the Cathedral(s) and the Parishes that are able. Through digital mediums and e-mail resources - Pastors can send out prayers, and other pastoral aids to help the faithful to follow along the Holy Week liturgies from home.

For Parishes who have already ordered palms - these can be collected by the pastor or another from Universal Church Supply - blessed privately by the priest (using the prayer found for the Palm Sunday Mass) in anticipation to that Sunday's liturgy. The faithful can individually pick these blessed palms up from their parish (the pastor can determine the safest way to make these available, perhaps having a table with them spread out for parishioners to pick them up).

The Chrism Mass will be celebrated privately by the Bishop - with the renewal of priestly promises to be done individually the priests unable to be present - and this can be publicly done at some point in the future. Instructions for the picking up of the oils will be given directly to the priests.

The Good Friday veneration of the Cross during the liturgy is done by the priest alone - and Form of the Good Friday liturgy which calls for no individual veneration by the faithful but rather a moment of silent prayer is to be used. The Congregation for Sacred Worship has indicated that possibly the veneration of the Cross may be transferred for the faithful to a future liturgy - such as the Solemn Feast of the Triumph of the Cross (Sep. 14).

For parishes with multiple Catechumens for baptism (and candidates for Full Communion within the Catholic Church) - this cannot be done at the Easter Vigil without exceeding the public gathering restrictions. Unless it is determined best to postpone the celebration, the pastor is to celebrate privately and individually the Sacraments of Initiation for Catechumens determined by the Pastor and the individual. This is to be done only with the Catechumen, the priest, and the godparents - not to exceed the stated number for public gatherings and maintaining adequate physical distance between those gathered.

Unless it is determined best to postpone the celebration, the pastor is to celebrate privately and individually the reception into Full Communion and the Confirmation of all Candidates at a time determined by the Pastor and the individual. This is to be done only with the candidate, the priest, and the godparents.

Along with watching online the liturgies and at any other moment throughout the day, parishioners can be invited to make an act of Spiritual Communion at the appropriate time:

My Jesus,

I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.

I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.

Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You.

Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.

- St. Alphonsus of Liguori