



Liturgical Guidelines for Celebrating Holy Week in the Absence of an Assembly

During this unprecedented time, the Vatican has offered guidelines and instructions for how to celebrate Holy Week liturgies in the absence of a congregation. The commentary below walks through the Roman Missal and seeks to clarify any questions that might come up in deciding how to implement such liturgies. Each section begins with a Vatican instruction, and follows with practical discussion as developed by the DSJ Office of Liturgy and Liturgical Commission.

Participation of the faithful during Triduum when gathering in person is not possible

The Vatican Decree encourages pastors to inform the faithful of the times of the liturgical celebrations, “so that they can prayerfully unite themselves in their homes” to the prayer of the Church. In this regard, the Decree continues, the “means of live (not recorded) telematic broadcasts can be of help”. It then emphasizes how important it is to dedicate “adequate time for prayer”. The Liturgy of the Hours, it noted, is especially important. The Decree grants special permission to all priests to celebrate Mass “in a suitable place, without the presence of the people”. If you plan to live stream, please be sure to submit your live stream times and streaming link to christopher.wemp@dsj.org

Please visit this page for best practices in live streaming a liturgy:
<https://npm.org/livestreaming-other-technology-resources/>

Presiders, please review these pastoral guidelines for presiding on camera:
<https://npm.org/nine-pastoral-reflection-points-on-the-live-streaming-of-mass-fr-ricky-manalo/>

Vatican Instruction for Palm Sunday

*Holy Week begins with the celebration of Palm Sunday. The Commemoration of the Lord’s Entrance into Jerusalem is to be celebrated within sacred buildings. When celebrated in Cathedral churches, the decree specifies the second form from the Roman Missal is to be used, and the **third form when it takes place in parish churches.***

Commentary: Parishes are instructed to use the third form, which the Roman Missal defines as The Simple Entrance. For the simple entrance, the presider simply proceeds to the altar in a regular entrance procession as a suitable song commemorating the Lord’s entrance into Jerusalem is sung. If a song is not able to be sung, the Priest, as soon as he has arrived at the altar and venerated it, greets the people, reads the Entrance Antiphon printed in the Roman Missal, and continues the Mass in the usual way.



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The Roman Missal notes that the penitential act is only able to be omitted when using the first two forms of the entrance. Thus, when using the Simple Entrance, you will proceed with the penitential act after the greeting.

If your parish was not able to cancel its palm order, palms can be blessed outside of the Mass using the Roman Missal blessing prayer found in the first form of the Palm Sunday entrance rite.

Vatican Instruction for Holy Thursday

In Cathedral and parish churches, where and in the measure that there is a real possibility of doing so, established by the one responsible, the priest(s) of the parish can celebrate the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper. The faculty to celebrate Mass on this day in a suitable place, without the people, is granted in an exceptional manner to all priests. The washing of feet, which already is optional, is to be omitted. At the end of the Mass of the Lord's Supper the procession with the Blessed Sacrament to the place of repose is to be omitted and the Blessed Sacrament is to be kept in the tabernacle. Priests who are unable to celebrate Mass should instead pray Vespers of the day (cf. Liturgia Horarum).

Commentary: Your deanery's dean will have delivered your parish's transport oils to your parish before the evening of Holy Thursday (provided you returned your empty vessels to the chancery earlier this year). Thus, you are able to celebrate the Reception of the Holy Oils (whose [guidelines are located on the USCCB webpage.](#)) Because of social distancing realities and the impossibility of a minister handing over the oils in a procession, set up a side table that is visible on camera and place the oil vessels on it before the liturgy begins. Proclaim the prayers located in the USCCB link and then state that the oils will be reposed at the conclusion of the liturgy.

The USCCB does grant provision to receive and bless the oils on a different day if it is impossible on Holy Thursday; thus, if the logistics here are not doable for your parish, then you can eliminate the reception of oils until a later date.

At the end of the Mass, the procession with the Blessed Sacrament to the place of repose is to be omitted and the Blessed Sacrament is to be kept in the Tabernacle. The Mass is then concluded in the usual way.

Vatican Instruction for Good Friday

In Cathedral and parish churches, where and in the measure that there is a real possibility of doing so, established by the one responsible, the Bishop/Parish Priest will celebrate the Passion of the Lord. In the Universal Prayer, the Bishop will see to it that



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there is a special intention for the sick, the dead, for those who feel lost or dismayed (cf. Missale Romanum, pag. 314, n. 13).

Commentary:

As noted in Bishop Cantú's Holy Week Memo, this prayer is to be included in the **Solemn Intercessions:**

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.”

The Showing of the Holy Cross has two forms as defined in the Roman Missal. In a live stream environment, a **modified first form** is sensible, mindful that processing around an empty church doesn't make sense, especially if the faithful are watching from a video feed and cannot see or hear the presider while processing:

The Priest picks up the cross from off camera, which is covered with a violet veil and is pre-stationed somewhere off camera but close by. Candle bearers are omitted. Standing in front of the entrance to the sanctuary (most likely in front of the altar, and on camera), he says or sings, “Behold the wood of the Cross,” to which the response of any others present is, “Come, let us adore.”

During the first “Behold...” proclamation, the Priest unveils a little bit of the upper part of the cross and elevates it, careful to make sure that the camera captures this elevation. He pauses for a brief moment of silence while maintaining the cross elevated. He repeats this pattern and uncovers the right arm of the Cross. Finally, he uncovers the Cross entirely while repeating the same pattern. **He does all this while remaining stationary so as to remain on camera.**

For the Adoration of the Holy Cross: For those in attendance in person, they are invited to adore the Holy Cross by either genuflecting or profoundly bowing, while careful to maintain 6 feet of distance. Afterwards, the Priest takes the Cross and, standing in the middle before the altar, invites the people 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” (Roman Missal, The Passion of the Lord, no. 19). The adoration of the Cross by



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kissing it is limited solely to the celebrant. This can be done after inviting the people viewing from afar to adore the Holy Cross.

Vatican Instruction for The Easter Vigil

The Easter Vigil: Is to be celebrated only in Cathedral and parish churches, where and in the measure that there is a real possibility of doing so, established by the one responsible. At "The Solemn Beginning of the Vigil or Lucenariurn" the preparation and lighting of the fire is omitted, the Paschal Candle is lit, the procession is omitted and the Easter Proclamation (Exsultet) follows. The "Liturgy of the Word" then takes place. For the "Baptismal Liturgy" the "Renewal of Baptismal Promises" alone is necessary (cf. Missale Romanum, pag. 371, n. 55). The "Liturgy of the Eucharist" then follows. Those who have absolutely no possibility of uniting themselves to the Paschal Vigil celebrated in a church should pray the Office of Readings for Easter Sunday (cf. Liturgia Horarum)."

Commentary: The liturgy begins with the Priest in his place at the chair, and proceeds as instructed in n. 9 of the Roman Missal for Easter Vigil. **Number 10 is eliminated.** Per n. 11, the paschal candle is prepared and lit. Because most candles arrive pre-prepared with the carving, the presider says the prayer of n.11 and then inserts the five grains of incense per n.12. Due to social distancing requirements, a table station should be established prior to the liturgy which allows the Roman Missal to be open for the prayers, along with room for the candle to be prepared with the incense inserts. If the Priest is unable to manage preparing the candle alone in these circumstances, then the candle is to be prepared before the liturgy begins. The candle is then lit (n.14).

After the candle is lit, the **Exsultet is immediately proclaimed.** The procession prior to the Exsultet is omitted.

The Liturgy of the Word: While all 9 readings are encouraged, At least 3 of the 7 assigned Old Testament readings are to be proclaimed from the Law and the Prophets, along with their respective Responsorial Psalms; per the Ordo, the Exodus reading must be included. **In place of the Responsorial Psalm, a period of sacred silence may be observed.** (Roman Missal, The Easter Vigil n.19). **The DSJ Cathedral will use 5 Old Testament Readings, per the Bishop's request; parishes are to decide for themselves how many, and which, readings are to be used depending on the pastoral needs of their assemblies.*

Baptismal Liturgy: Only the renewal of baptismal promises is to be maintained. The full initiation of the elect has been transferred to Pentecost Sunday. The blessing of water is omitted. Thus after the homily, proceed directly to n.55 of the Roman Missal. **Omit the sprinkling rite.**