



## REVEREND DANIEL B. CARSON

VICAR GENERAL AND MODERATOR OF THE CURIA

Dear Brother Priest,

I write today to provide you updates. I will continue to keep you informed as we navigate this challenging time.

### **General Absolution**

Given the danger to health and the practical difficulties imposed by the present COVID-19 pandemic, and taking into account the guidance recently issued by the Apostolic Penitentiary at the Holy See, and with a view toward the good of the souls entrusted to his care, Archbishop Gregory has issued a decree stating that the conditions for the use of general absolution exist within the Archdiocese of Washington.

Therefore, in hospitals, nursing homes and other health care facilities within the Archdiocese, where a priest is not allowed personally to interact with patients or staff due to COVID-19 restrictions, he may impart general absolution, with the following provisions:

Before a priest imparts general absolution, insofar as is possible, he is to inform the faithful of their need to be properly disposed, to make an act of contrition, and to intend to confess their grave sins within a suitable period of time when the opportunity arises (can. 962 §§1-2).

When the priest actually imparts general absolution, the faithful are to know that he is doing so, and his voice should be clearly audible by those receiving absolution. This may be done over a public address system or by other means.

This faculty is granted immediately to all priests incardinated in the Archdiocese of Washington, to all extern priests who have the faculties of the Archdiocese, and to any priest who is actually within the boundaries of the Archdiocese at the time that he has need to use the faculty, without prejudice to the provisions of canon 976 and remains in effect until it is rescinded. The decree is linked [here](#).

### **Plans for Holy Week**

As you can imagine, this year's celebration of Holy Week will look very different given the current pandemic. Archbishop Gregory will celebrate the Holy Week liturgies at St. Matthew's Cathedral, which will be live streamed to allow the faithful of the Archdiocese to join in prayer. A worship aid will also be made available electronically.

For the celebration of Holy Week liturgies in parishes, detailed guidance on how to implement the recent decree from the Congregation for Divine Worship will soon be forthcoming directly to you from the Office of Worship.

In the meantime, a summary of the modifications follows:

- To avoid the transmission of the coronavirus, palms should not be distributed on Palm Sunday, including the practice of leaving palms out for the faithful to pick up.
- This year's Chrism Mass is postponed until large gatherings can resume. Oils blessed at the last Chrism Mass may continue to be used; in case of emergency, the Oil of the Sick can be blessed by the priest within the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.
- Although as a general rule the Triduum liturgies are not to be celebrated without the people, this requirement is lifted for this year. If a priest is alone in a parish (i.e., there are no concelebrants or deacons available), it is permitted to have a minimal number of assisting ministers for a dignified celebration (for example, in making the responses for the Renewal of Baptismal Promises or if the liturgies are being live streamed).
- On Holy Thursday, the Washing of the Feet and the Transfer of the Blessed Sacrament are omitted
- On Good Friday, an additional intercession for an end to the pandemic is to be included; the text of this prayer will be distributed once it is approved by the USCCB.
- On Easter Vigil, the Easter fire and procession are omitted (the lighting of the paschal candle and the Exsultet are retained), as are the blessing of Holy Water and the Sacraments of Initiation (only the Renewal of Baptismal Promises is retained).

Thank you for your patience as we navigate this unique liturgical experience, and let us continue to pray for an end to this pandemic. As mentioned, the Office of Worship will send out the detailed guidance soon. The archbishop's scripts will also be made available upon request for your use. Rev. Martino Choi, Director of the Office of Worship, can be contacted to answer questions at [ChoiM@adw.org](mailto:ChoiM@adw.org) and at 301-853-4595.

## **Funerals and Weddings**

Both Funerals and Weddings can still take place with strict adherence to the number of people gathered and previously issued precautions. With many District and Maryland government offices closed, it has come to our attention that couples may not be able to obtain a marriage license. We will have information forthcoming on how this will be addressed for upcoming weddings.

## **Catholic Cemeteries**

With a challenge of too many people gathering at burials, the cemeteries are closed to visitors at this time. Direct burials are taking place with only the priest allowed in attendance.

## **What Does Deep Cleaning Mean?**

Many priests have requested guidance on cleaning. Linked [here](#) is guidance provided by the CDC.

## **Remind the Faithful of Information on the Website**

The archdiocesan website in response to the coronavirus is updated regularly with information, in English and Spanish, for you and the faithful. I encourage you to continue to share the website [adw.org/coronavirus/](http://adw.org/coronavirus/) which includes a [link](#) to find a listing of live stream Masses and prayers.

As always, should you have questions or need assistance from my office and the Pastoral Center, please let us know. Please be assured of my prayers for you.

With deep appreciation for your priestly ministry, I am  
Sincerely in Christ,  
Reverend Daniel B. Carson  
Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia