



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.

Liturgical Considerations for Holy Week

On March 19, 2020, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued a decree regarding the celebration of the Holy Week Liturgies during the time of covid-19 (Prot. N. 153/20), followed by an update on March 25. These decrees greatly abbreviate the celebration of the various liturgies during Holy Week and adapt them for celebration without a congregation given the pastoral exigencies.

Linked [here](#) are the decrees' prescriptions that are applicable to parish priests celebrating the Holy Week liturgies, along with commentary on their application. Unless noted otherwise, the texts refer to the initial decree on March 19. Roman Missal 3rd Edition page citations are from Catholic Book Publishing Corporation edition.

Should you have questions or comments about the plan at this point, please reach out to Fr. Martino Choi at choim@adw.org or at 301-853-4595.

Update on Pastoral Care of the Sick

As previously mentioned, we were seeking a process of having specific priests that would be able to anoint patients with the coronavirus and how to do so in a safe way. I have consulted with the medical team that has been working with us at Holy Cross Health. They would not require a priest having anointed a patient with coronavirus to self-isolate afterward. The specific guidelines from the Holy Cross Health team are as follows:

1. If the priest is following all the appropriate PPE (personal protective equipment) guidance and restrictions as prescribed by the hospital or medical facility, then they are not exposed and do not need to do anything "special" afterwards. The priest should ask the clinical team at the facility to offer very specific guidance when putting PPE on and taking it off.
2. The recommendation for anyone who comes into contact with anyone who is ill is to monitor their health. If they feel feverish or have any respiratory symptoms they are to hold in place (self-isolation at this point) and call their doctor if symptoms continue more than 24 hours.
3. PPE is in very short supply in most places. More than one visit by a priest to the same patient would take critical PPE out of circulation for our clinical teams. From a common good position, the priest should be prepared to have

the difficult conversation with patients or their families if they request multiple visits by the priest.

As previously communicated, many medical facilities are not letting chaplains in at this time, as well as family members to visit. In light of that, Archbishop Gregory issued the General Absolution decree that was previously shared with you. I'm sharing with you again linked [here](#).

I was asked if out of an abundance of caution when anointing someone that is ill but not known to have the coronavirus, can you still use an instrument just in case the person might have the virus but does not know it. Yes, an instrument can be used. As a reminder, here is the guidance: The Code of Canon Law permits the use of an instrument (CIC 1000 §2), for example, a cotton swab. In such case, the used instrument should not come in contact again with the oil stock and should be disposed of in a reverent manner. In case of necessity, a single anointing on the forehead or on any other part of the body with the entire sacramental form ("Through this holy anointing... May the Lord who frees you from sin...") suffices (CIC 1000 §1; PCS, 23). For any further clarification, please contact Rev. Martino Choi, Director of the Office of Worship at choim@adw.org or at 301-853-4595.

Since we will run into many occasions where we won't be able to administer the anointing of the sick and other sacraments, Msgr. Charles Pope wrote these words that I wanted to share with you that you might find useful:

"Many questions have arisen about receiving sacraments in a time of significant concern about the coronavirus. In ordinary circumstances Catholics are expected to actively seek the sacraments in the usual way the Church offers them. However, there are times when the Sacraments cannot be given due to extraordinary circumstances such as extreme weather, natural disasters or plague. In some parts of the world too, priests are not routinely available. In such cases Catholics should be reassured that the desire to receive the sacraments is, itself a way to receive the Sacrament. God does not ask of us the impossible or the unreasonable. There is a long tradition stretching back to the good thief on the cross of the "baptism of desire." Jesus assured him of paradise even though he could not, at that moment, receive baptism in the usual way. In these times of pandemic, we have also had to rediscover the tradition of spiritual Communion. When the faithful cannot reasonably receive Holy Communion, they are encouraged to express their desire for it to the Lord and be assured that, in their desire for Holy Communion sincerely expressed, they receive the graces of it. The faithful should also be assured that, in their desire for the Anointing of the Sick and Confession, if they cannot reasonably receive them in the ordinary manner, God knows their desire and will surely supply the graces they seek. God knows our hearts and will grant the graces we seek even if the usual ways he has set forth are not possible. May God's people be at peace in this time of pandemic knowing that their priests continue to offer the Mass on their behalf and that, through their desires, they are united to the Lord who seeks to bless them."

Baptisms

Baptisms already scheduled may proceed but attendance must strictly follow the mandated limit of 10 people. Of course, in the case of emergency, baptism should be conferred. Please also maintain the prescribed social distancing and precautions.

Use of MDLIVE – access to health care remotely

As previously communicated, <https://www.mdlive.com/> gives you secure access to health care from the convenience of your phone, computer or tablet. MD Live also provides behavioral health assistance through online counseling sessions. This is available to the clergy and employees who have health insurance through the Archdiocese of Washington. You can go to the website and register for MD Live now. That way your account will be ready to go if you need to contact a doctor. This is an excellent resource if you have a non-emergency medical need and are concerned about going to your doctor's office.

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/ 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