



Very Reverend Daniel B. Carson

Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia

Dear Brother Priest,

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

Liturgical Guidelines for Lent and Holy Week 2021

The following instructions provide guidelines for celebrations taking place in February, Lent and Holy Week of 2021. The “Public Celebration of Mass and Holy Communion Outside of Mass” guidelines issued May 14, 2020 and revised on October 15, 2020 are still in effect, in particular the continuing dispensation of the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday. Please be advised that additional guidance from the Holy See regarding Lent and Holy Week may be forthcoming that might alter the guidelines provided below. For ease of printing, the guideline document is also linked **here**.

Blessing of Throats on the Feast of St. Blaise

The Order for the Blessing of Throats on the Feast of Saint Blaise is found in Chapter 51 of the Book of Blessings (BB). To minimize individual contact, priests are to use the option for a blessing of the entire assembly from the sanctuary. Refer to BB 1628:

If, for pastoral reasons, each individual cannot be blessed in the manner described in no. 1627 (individual blessing) ... a priest or deacon may give the blessing to all assembled by extending hands, without the crossed candles, over the people while saying the prayer of blessing...

Ash Wednesday—Distribution of the Ashes

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has published a note detailing how Catholic priests are to distribute ashes. This is to be the norm throughout the Archdiocese of Washington.

After blessing the ashes and sprinkling them with holy water in silence, the priest addresses those present, reciting once the formula found in the Roman Missal: “Repent, and believe in the Gospel” or “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return”. At that point, the priest cleanses his hands, puts on

a face mask, and distributes ashes to those who come to him or, if appropriate, he goes to those who are standing in their places. He then sprinkles the ashes on each person's head "without saying anything."

As modeled by Pope Francis, the ashes are sprinkled above the individual's head so that immediate physical contact is avoided. As is customary, a priest may employ a deacon and/or the laity to assist with the distribution of ashes. Please note that pastors should discuss with their parish deacons and/or lay ministers any particular circumstances such as age, pre-existing conditions, secular employment, or family health situations that may limit their participation in this liturgical ministry. Due to the American custom of imposing ashes on the forehead in the sign of the Cross, pastors should provide catechesis to the faithful about the sprinkling of ashes on the head and how this is an ancient practice of the Church still used in many countries. Pastors can also remind the faithful that receiving ashes on Ash Wednesday is not obligatory and the faithful can remain in their seats during the imposition of ashes.

Confession during Lent

Catholics are encouraged during the penitential season of Lent to receive the Sacrament of Penance, and traditionally the Archdiocese promotes our annual *The Light is On for You* initiative with Confessions scheduled on Wednesday evenings during Lent. As social distancing guidelines remain this Lent we will not ask parishes to host Confession times on a specific day or night of the week. We do, however, encourage parishes to continue to offer the Sacrament of Confession in safe and creative ways that meet the needs of your people. While the handing out of parish printed materials has been discouraged we recognize that many Catholics rely upon Confession materials to make a good Confession. We ask that any materials used by a parishioner is taken home with them or discarded and not touched and reused by others. Additional Confession resources can be found year-round at <https://thelightison.org/toolkit/>.

Rite of Election (and the Call to Continuing Conversion)—First Two Sundays of Lent

The 2021 Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion (RECCC) will be celebrated in a hybrid format at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on Sunday, February 21 and Sunday, February 28, with designated parish representatives attending in-person and all other catechumen, candidates, sponsors and families participating remotely. The Office for Catechesis has already communicated with parish RCIA Coordinators the details below.

Parishes who will be sending representatives to the Basilica should pay careful attention to the following information:

- Each parish is limited to a maximum of three in-person representatives – one presenter, one catechumen, one candidate. Parishes who do not have both catechumen and candidates will be limited to two participants.

- Participants attending in-person should be adults. Children and youth are encouraged to participate remotely.
- In-person attendance will be by ticket only. No individual will be admitted without advance registration and a printed ticket.

Parishes who, out of an abundance of caution, choose not to participate in-person should participate remotely. Livestreaming information will be sent in advance of the Rite. Parishes who choose not to attend in-person still need to notify the Office of Catechesis at javierk@adw.org. As a reminder, we still need a record of all catechumen and candidates for the 2021 RECCC program. If you have not already done so, please register your catechumen and candidates with the Office of Catechesis.

If you have questions about the celebration of the RECCC, please contact Sara Blauvelt at blauvelts@adw.org.

Palm Sunday—Distribution of the Palms

Distribution of the palms may occur on Palm Sunday at all Masses, as long as pastors ensure this distribution occurs as safely as possible. Ushers, for example, wearing gloves, may distribute palms at the end of Mass. Alternatively, palms may be laid out on tables near the entrance/exit doors of the church or near the gathering space so they may be picked up by parishioners at the end of Mass on their way out. If this last option is chosen, parishioners need to be instructed on the requirement to sanitize their hands prior to picking up the palms from the table. In either case, the blessing of the palms will take place in the usual manner at the beginning of Mass and parishioners must maintain appropriate six-foot social distancing during the distribution.

Chrism Mass

Currently the Chrism Mass is anticipated to occur on the annual date of the Monday before Easter 2021 with limited attendance. More details will be forthcoming.

Holy Thursday (Mandatum)

Washing of the feet is permitted. Those to have their feet washed must be seated six feet apart from one another.

For churches that do not have sufficient space to distance 12 people in the sanctuary, the ritual allows for a representative number of people fewer than 12. As a reminder, the washing of feet at the Mass of the Lord's Supper is always optional according to the ritual text.

Good Friday (Veneration of the Cross)

Veneration of the Cross is permitted on Good Friday. Use the same considerations as those used for the Communion procession, e.g. six-foot social distancing between individuals, etc. Kissing the cross is NOT allowed. Those who venerate must do so only with a bow or genuflection.

Easter Vigil

The Sacraments of Initiation may be celebrated at the Easter Vigil this year assuming all usual COVID restrictions are observed.

Remind the Faithful of Information on the Website

The archdiocesan website is updated regularly. Please see adw.org/coronavirus for information related to the coronavirus, adw.org/live-streamed-masses-and-prayers/ for a listing of live stream Masses and prayers, and cathstan.org and elpreg.org for the *Catholic Standard* and the Spanish-language *El Pregonero* newspapers.

As always, should you have questions or need assistance from my office and the Pastoral Center, please let us know.

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