

Holy Week Directives

With public Masses and other liturgical gatherings suspended at least through Holy Week and Easter, Bishop Mark is inviting the faithful to watch the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown weekly television Mass on Passion (Palm) Sunday and Easter Sunday at 11:00 a.m. on WATM ABC 23 and at 9:00 p.m. on Atlantic Broadband channel 9.

The Masses are also aired on Sundays at 10:00 a.m. on WFBG AM 1290 and posted on the diocesan website and Facebook and Twitter social media platforms. Holy Week services, including Holy Thursday and Good Friday, are available through national television networks, including the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN).

In this time of need, directives have been issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, as well as the USCCB Committee on Divine Worship concerning the liturgical celebrations for Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter.

Taking into account the local circumstances of our diocese, Bishop Mark has informed clergy of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown of the following directives for Triduum/Easter, with emphasis that no other persons are permitted to be present for health and safety reasons, mindful of the expectation of health officials that the spread of the COVID-19 virus is likely to be close to peak level in our country at the time of Holy Week and Easter.

Chrism Mass

This Mass is postponed until further notice. It is anticipated that the holy oils will be consecrated/blessed at one of the first liturgies when the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament (and other churches) are able to resume the normal liturgical schedule. Until such time as the Chrism Mass is celebrated, priests are reminded to continue using the oils consecrated/blessed last year.

Mass of the Lord's Supper

This Mass is to be celebrated without the people present. It is to be celebrated in the evening as is the tradition. Since churches are to be locked at 7 pm, this Mass could be celebrated after that time. There is no foot washing and there is no solemn procession to the tabernacle. Following the Mass, priests and deacons are encouraged to pray before the Blessed Sacrament for a time. Night prayer would be appropriate.

Good Friday

The liturgy of the Passion of the Lord is celebrated without the people present. Permission is hereby granted for this liturgy to take place in the rectory, having made arrangements for the Blessed Sacrament to be present for the reception of Holy Communion by the priest and deacon. Veneration of the cross may take the form of bowing, genuflecting, or kneeling before a cross during the liturgy.

As an alternative to celebrating the Good Friday liturgy of the Passion of the Lord, the faithful are encouraged to pray the Stations of the Cross at home.

The liturgies of Easter are to be celebrated without the people present.

Easter Vigil

According to the liturgical norms promulgated by the Apostolic See, the Easter Vigil is celebrated only in a Cathedral or church. The Easter Vigil will be celebrated by Bishop Mark at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament without the people present, but joined by the Cathedral priests. Priests are permitted to celebrate the Easter Vigil in their own parishes as long as the celebration takes place in a church and occurs after sundown, after the church doors are locked.

Easter Day

If the priest is celebrating alone, the sprinkling of the people is omitted for obvious reason. Permission is granted for the priest to celebrate only one Mass on Easter during the day, if the Easter Vigil Mass was celebrated. If the parish schedule would normally provide for more than one Mass on Easter Day, permission is given to include all the intentions at the same celebration.