

*DIOCESE OF LANCASTER*  
**UPDATED COVID-19 ADVICE (based on C.B.C.E.W. advice)**  
**26th March 2020**

*Note that this is a modified version of the CBCEW guidance for Lancaster Diocese.  
Colleagues in other dioceses will receive guidance from their own bishop.*

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### **Live streaming of Mass**

With the current Government guidelines, the participants in any live-streamed liturgy must be those who form the “household” of the priest. No one may travel to the Church in order to participate, e.g. servers, cantors, choirs, and deacons. The only exception to this is where a priest genuinely needs help to celebrate a liturgy. Any streamed Mass must model the social distancing rules in force.

Bishops may travel to their Cathedrals to celebrate the Holy Week liturgies as this is deemed essential to their work.

Signing for the deaf for live-streamed services would involve non-essential travel so is not to be approved.

Streamed Masses should not include concelebrants.

### **Cremations and Burials**

The guidance issued last week remains, namely no church services but graveside and crematorium services only. Government and local advice from crematoria and cemeteries should be followed regarding the number present at these funerals. The priest present must follow the guidelines regarding social distancing.

It is possible that the number of burials and cremations will increase with crematoria having to work 24 hours a day at the peak of the contagion. Deaneries, or districts, should draw up a rota of priests/deacons/lay people who could be present at any time for prayers at a crematorium in these circumstances. The management of a crematorium should be made aware of this provision, together with a rota and contact details for those on it.

It was agreed that coffins should not rest in closed churches overnight as this involves opening churches which, at this time, should remain closed.

Forms of celebrations such as a simple burial of ashes, or a Requiem Mass (or a memorial service) in the presence of the ashes would be appropriate once the pandemic has ended. Please advise local funeral directors of this option, so they know to make families aware of this option.

### **Limitations on the Ministry of Priests**

Much of priestly ministry is currently “on hold” at this time, and priests should devote themselves to the daily celebration of Mass, prayer, reading and keeping in contact with their people by telephone and internet.

The essential aspects of priestly pastoral ministry which could continue at this time are the anointing of the dying (See Appendix 1), and the baptism of children *in extremis*.

### **Sacrament of Reconciliation**

In addition to the earlier guidance it is to be noted that confessions cannot be heard over the telephone. Services of General Absolution cannot be held as this involves travel and the gathering of people. Requests for individual confession may be difficult to meet, given the demands of social distancing and church closure. It is deemed reasonable for a priest to refuse a request for these reasons. See also ‘Easter Duties’ below.

### **Support for Priests over 70/vulnerable priests – reception of specific visitors for support**

Dioceses are being asked to identify any priest over 70 who needs additional help. A good practice would be for the deans to contact every priest once a week to monitor how things are with them. Anyone in need of support should be encouraged to reach out for help, including that offered by the local authorities. Requests made for funerals or anointing to older, or more vulnerable, clergy should be declined or referred to a younger priest. As previously indicated, priests who are unwell should notify their dean (or subdean), who will make a daily phone call to the ill priest and arrange delivery of food etc if necessary.

## Hospital Chaplaincy

Some hospitals are stopping visits from all clergy or restricting visits to chaplains only. It may be important to establish a backup list of priests known to the hospitals to enable visits to continue if the chaplain becomes unavailable.

## Holy Week

- The Congregation for Divine Worship has issued a decree dated 25th March 2020, updating a decree issued on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020. (See Appendix 2)
- **Chrism Mass – simple celebration**  
A simple celebration of the Mass of Chrism will be celebrated at Cathedral at 11.00am behind closed doors. The blessed oils and Consecrated Chrism will be distributed at a time and date when restrictions are eventually lifted. No clergy should travel to this celebration.
- CBCEW will issue bishops with a text for priests to enable them to make a personal renewal of their priestly promises on Maundy Thursday. The bishop invites you to renew these promises between 11.00am-11.30am on Maundy Thursday.
- **Prayer resources for Holy Week for families and personal prayer**  
The *Magnificat* for Holy Week was recommended as an excellent resource. This is a supplement to the April edition and is available by mail order or by subscription. Many other resources are already available.
- **Special intentions in the Universal Prayer of Good Friday:**  
Will be sent out shortly.
- **Easter Duties**  
The faithful are dispensed from their Easter duties (See Bishop of Lancaster's decree - 26<sup>th</sup> March).

## Monastic and other Enclosed Communities

Under C.B.C.E.W. guidance, priest chaplains observing the necessary hygiene and distancing conditions can celebrate Mass for enclosed communities, if that is the wish of the community superior. However, in Lancaster Diocese, the preference of the bishop would be that serious consideration should be given to not attending a religious house to celebrate Mass, especially if it has a number of elderly or higher-risk members. Priests in higher risk health categories should also not celebrate Mass in these places. The faithful may also ask why they cannot attend Mass, when others are allowed to.

## Dispensation from Easter Duties & Perfect Act of Contrition

In their letter of 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020, the President and the Vice-President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales said "*in these emergency circumstances, and for as long as they last, the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days is removed. This is, without doubt, the teaching of the Church (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2181). This pandemic is the 'serious reason' why this obligation does not apply at this time.*"

Many of the faithful will be aware of their Easter Duties; that is to receive Holy Communion during the Easter Season and by custom, to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation beforehand. The Code of Canon Law (CIC 920) says *each of the faithful is obliged to receive holy communion at least once a year. This precept must be fulfilled during the Easter season unless it is fulfilled for a just cause at another time during the year.* The requirement for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation comes from the need to be in a state of grace to receive Holy Communion (CIC 916).

The Bishops have asked that all should make a Perfect Act of Contrition at this time.

## **APPENDIX 1 – ANOINTING OF THE SICK**

Guidelines for the administration of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick to those suffering from Coronavirus

In hospitals:

1. Priests over the age of 70 must not visit any patient in hospital regardless of the patient's illness
2. Ensure a rota is in place so that a younger priest is available for emergencies. If this is not possible and the patient is unable to communicate via telephone, then ask staff chaplains to offer prayers at the bedside having first sought the patient's/family's consent
3. Whichever priest attends the sick person, he must be sure not to have any underlying medical condition that could compromise his own well-being
4. Before visiting the patient inform ward staff. Be sure to don the required PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) and follow any post-visit cleansing indicated
5. Do not take books or oil stocks with you into the room. Take a printed sheet which must be left in the clinical waste. In a similar way, have a cotton bud prepared with the oil for anointing. This must also be left in the clinical waste

In the home:

1. In the absence of the PPE which is available in a hospital, pastoral visits should not be made to people who are self-isolating at home until the isolation period ends. Priests over the age of 70 should refrain from making any such visits. However, the use of telephone support where possible is very much encouraged as such contact with the priest can offer great reassurance and hope
2. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are likewise encouraged to make regular telephone contact with the housebound and to offer prayers but should refrain from visiting the sick in person in keeping with the current social-distancing policy

For any anointing during this period the Oil of the Sick should be applied using a cotton bud which can be burned afterwards (one end for the head and the other for the hands) and the priest should extend his hands over the sick person for the "laying on of hands", without physical contact. Holy Communion will be a "Spiritual Communion"

## APPENDIX 2

### CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP DECREE I (19<sup>th</sup> March 2020)

*This has been removed from the Vatican website*

### CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP DECREE II (25<sup>th</sup> March 2020)

#### In time of Covid-19 (II)

Considering the rapidly evolving situation of the Covid-19 pandemic and taking into account observations which have come from Episcopal Conferences, this Congregation now offers an update to the general indications and suggestions already given to Bishops in the preceding decree of 19 March 2020.

Given that the date of Easter cannot be transferred, in the countries which have been struck by the disease and where restrictions around the assembly and movement of people have been imposed, Bishops and priests may celebrate the rites of Holy Week without the presence of the people and in a suitable place, avoiding concelebration and omitting the sign of peace.

The faithful should be informed of the beginning times of the celebrations so that they can prayerfully unite themselves in their homes. Means of live (not recorded) telematic broadcasts can be of help. In any event it remains important to dedicate an adequate time to prayer, giving importance above all to the *Liturgia Horarum*.

The Episcopal Conferences and individual dioceses will see to it that resources are provided to support family and personal prayer.

1 - **Palm Sunday.** The Commemoration of the Lord's Entrance into Jerusalem is to be celebrated within sacred buildings; in Cathedral churches the second form given in the Roman Missal is to be adopted; in parish churches and in other places the third form is to be used.

2 – **The Chrism Mass.** Evaluating the concrete situation in different countries, the Episcopal Conferences will be able to give indications about a possible transfer to another date.

3 – **Holy Thursday.** The washing of feet, which is already optional, is to be omitted. At the end of the Mass of the Lord's Supper the procession is also omitted and the Blessed Sacrament is to be kept in the tabernacle. On this day the faculty to celebrate Mass in a suitable place, without the presence of the people, is exceptionally granted to all priests.

4 – **Good Friday.** In the Universal Prayer, Bishops will arrange to have a special intention prepared for those who find themselves in distress, the sick, the dead, (cf. *Missale Romanum*). The adoration of the Cross by kissing it shall be limited solely to the celebrant.

5 – **The Easter Vigil:** Is to be celebrated only in Cathedral and parish churches. For the "Baptismal Liturgy" only the "Renewal of Baptismal Promises" is maintained (cf. *Missale Romanum*).

Seminaries, houses of clergy, monasteries and religious communities shall follow the indications of this decree.

Expressions of popular piety and processions which enrich the days of Holy Week and the Paschal Triduum can be transferred to other suitable days in the year, for example 14 and 15 September, according to the judgement of the Diocesan Bishop.

*De mandato Summi Pontificis pro hoc tantum anno 2020.*

From the offices of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 25 March 2020, on the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord.

Robert Card. Sarah, *Prefect*

Arthur Roche, *Archbishop Secretary*

## **APPENDIX 3 MESSAGE FROM THE NUNCIATURE (26<sup>th</sup> March 2020)**

### Message from the Apostolic Nunciature

In order to offer intercession and consolation during this time of exceptional discomfort, the Holy Father will preside over a time of prayer and adoration in St Peter's Square, without a congregation of Lay people, on Friday 27 March at 5pm UK time,

This *Statio Orbis* will be broadcast on mondovision and streamed on the Vatican news.

During this time the Pope will impart the Urbi et Orbi blessing and will commend a plenary indulgence to all those persons who participate in these prayers via the communications media.

All Catholic faithful are invited to join the Holy Father and to pray with him on this occasion.

End