

Guidelines for Liturgical Celebrations during the Season of Lent 2021

The following are adjustments to various liturgical celebrations during the Season of Lent, 2021 due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic. More will be forthcoming from Rome as the time of Holy Week and Triduum approaches and will be shared on the website for the Office of Divine Worship - <https://www.gbdioc.org/worship/office-of-divine-worship>.

While it is a general rule that during the Season of Lent, flowers are not allowed to adorn the altar and the use of musical instrumentation is allowed only to support singing, it is especially true during this time that the use of choirs continues to be discouraged and that parishes should instead continue to utilize a cantor and musician to accompany the celebration of the Mass. (Roman Missal, Lent, no. 4) Pastoral discretion should be used in regard to congregational singing, but if the congregation is masked and distanced, it may be permitted.

In regard to the Sacrament of Reconciliation during the Season of Lent, we re-iterate the guidance given during the Season of Advent. It is not recommended to host reconciliation services with multiple priests present because these typically utilize priests within the “at risk” category to facilitate the Sacrament. One or a combination of the following are instead advised:

- Parishes enlist the assistance of priests from a neighboring parish/es to host opportunities for one-on-one confessions
- Priests offer extended hours for opportunities for reconciliation to accommodate increased opportunities for the faithful to participate in the Sacrament
- That if a reconciliation service is to be held, the assistance of priests not in the “at risk” category be utilized

The Liturgical [Guidelines for Public Masses in Times of Very High COVID-19 Alert](#) continue to apply to all liturgies.

Pertaining to specific celebrations of the Mass during Lent the following guidelines are given:

Ash Wednesday – February 17

- During the distribution of Ashes, there are a number of ways that this could be safely done, including having separate Ash distribution lines - if possible - where different methods could be employed. In order to be the most vigilant and to prevent the spread of COVID 19, the Diocese suggests the following two options; however, pastoral discretion is allowed in this matter:
 - o Sprinkle a small portion of ashes on top of the person’s head rather than to trace the sign of the Cross on the person’s forehead. This is a European tradition that allows the distribution of ashes without the element of touch. Please see the image below as a demonstration:



- Use an individual cotton ball or q-tip for each recipient to distribute ashes. This would be done by taking a cotton ball/q-tip, dipping it in a little bit of water, then dabbing it in the bowl of ashes. With the cotton ball/q-tip, then trace a cross on the recipient's forehead. A new cotton ball/side of the q-tip should be used for each person. After the use of each cotton ball, it should be placed in an acceptable receptacle. After the distribution of Ashes, the cotton balls should then be burned.
- Because of this adaptation it is advisable that the faithful be instructed in advance that this is to occur so as to prevent them from wearing clothing that may be stained by the ashes as well as to prepare them for this form of distribution.

The First Sunday of Lent – February 21

- The Rite of Sending for those participating in RCIA can be held as usual in parishes. If a parish should need assistance with this Rite, they may contact the Office of Divine Worship.

The Second Sunday of Lent – February 28

- The Rite of Election is held at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral at 1pm. Parishes should reserve spots for their Catechumens no later than February 14 through the online registration form. Candidates are not required to attend.

Palm Sunday – March 28

- If the congregation can be gathered in a space where all the faithful can maintain social distancing, or if weather might permit the faithful to be gathered outside and an adequate sound system utilized to amplify, then the First Form: The Procession may be utilized. (please see the *Roman Missal*, Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord, nos. 2 – 11) If these conditions are not provided, then the parish should utilize either the Second Form – where just the priest and those performing the ministries of the Mass are gathered for the Entrance Rite and Blessing of Palms or Third Form of the Entrance Rite.
- Palm Branches may be blessed and distributed with reasonable caution.