



## Coronavirus (COVID-19) Message from Archbishop John and updates 3 April

Archbishop John has sent out an email this morning using the RCAOS system. A copy of this is included below, apologies again for any duplication:

### **To the Clergy of the Archdiocese of Southwark**

Friday 3 March 2020

*Jesus said to Martha, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, 'Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.' When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go free.' (Luke 11:40-44)*

Dear brothers in Christ

I write to you as we soon begin celebrating the Great Week of our Salvation in Christ. In the saving death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, we are unbound from death and set free from sin.

And yet this Holy Week will be unlike any other. This year we celebrate without public liturgies. The Chrism Mass is postponed. The Sacraments of Initiation and Receptions into the Church are deferred. Our liturgies are pared back. It is the very opposite of what we would want and choose, and a cause of sadness to us and our parishioners.

But our people need us. Your people need you. They need us to do for them, on their behalf, what we cannot do physically together. Every step this Holy Week we will be carrying our people in our hearts, the people of our parishes and communities, of our nation and of the world. For so many Catholics, the fact that the liturgy continues in our churches, enabling them to associate spiritually, and participate through social media, brings immense comfort and reassurance, even as we yearn for a restoration of the Church's sacramental life.

For those who love the Lord, the ties of faith remain intact. We, acting in the person of Christ, conformed to Him, in Him, with Him, and through Him, are, more than ever, a 'bond of connection' fulfilling the sacramental ministry committed to us personally through the Mystical Body of Christ's Church.

Might we allow this year's solitary experience to draw us closer to Christ? The spirituality of solitude is embedded in the Lord's passion. Taken from his friends, Christ is isolated and imprisoned, tortured and mocked, brought before judges, and condemned to death. A faithful few attend him, but our Lord rests in the tomb alone. And from that isolation HE RISES. When it all seemed to have come to nothing, then it was truly accomplished. The communion of life defeats the isolation of death. HE RISES, just as we must rise this Easter, and our people with us.

My brothers, do not be downhearted by the prospect of keeping this Holy Week alone. We are never on our own in the life of faith. In our solitude, we will draw nearer to Christ in His dying. But by His resurrection, we enter communion, that common union, with the Living One. Ask the Lord for the whatever graces you need to enter these days with a heart united with His; a heart carrying the needs and intentions of our world and its people; the heart of St Simon of Cyrene, the heart of St Veronica, the heart of St John, the heart of our Blessed

Lady; the heart of a pastor, the heart of a disciple.

I want to thank you for all you have done to support your communities since public liturgy ceased and our churches closed. And I want to thank you in anticipation for all that you will do this coming week. It is very much appreciated. Most of all, thank you for being witnesses to Christ crucified and risen.

We know the Lord is with us. We know He never abandons us. Amen, Amen, we say, let it be so.

As we ride on in majesty to Jerusalem, as we imitate our servant king and adore our Eucharistic Saviour, as we are there when they crucify our Lord, as we rise to announce that battle is o'er and hell's armies flee, let our faith be strong and our hope be sure, today and always.

This following guidance for the celebration of Holy Week has been produced by the Archbishops of England and Wales based on the advice received in the Decrees of the Congregation for Divine Worship. (Copies of the relevant documents are attached and some notes of explanation have been added) This is in addition to all the other guidance and information sent in the previous clergy emails.

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## **1. Liturgical Guidance for Holy Week 2020**

- a. The liturgies of this Holy Week will be celebrated without the presence of the faithful. This will mean that the liturgies will need adaptation and simplification without losing the heart of their meaning. The Congregation for Divine worship has issued two decrees regarding the celebration of Holy Week. They have specifically asked that there are no concelebrated liturgies. (*Please also see the notes about this from the last Clergy Email of 28 March*)
- b. As requested by the Decree, the times of the various liturgies of Holy Week should be published in parishes and via the social media,

especially where those liturgies are to be live-streamed from the Cathedral or Parish church. The clergy, and the faithful, should dedicate time for prayer during Holy Week, in particular, the Liturgy of the Hours should be used to sanctify this most precious time in the liturgical year.

- c. **Palm Sunday** - The Mass of Palm Sunday is to be celebrated and the Commemoration of the Lord's Entrance into Jerusalem should be celebrated within the church buildings and not outside; in Cathedral churches, the Second Form (the Solemn Entrance) should be used, in parish churches and other places the Third Form (the Simple Entrance) should be used. There is no blessing of palms in the third form.
  - i. Palms could be kept until next year, or parish priests may wish to bless palms separately from the liturgy so that they can be available to their people at a later date when the restrictions are lifted and travel becomes possible.
  - ii. Palm should not be blessed and then made available for collection by parishioners.
- d. On the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week, Mass takes place as per the present restrictions.
- e. **Chrism Mass** - The Archbishops of England and Wales, noting that the Holy Father has deferred the celebration of the Chrism Mass, have asked that a gesture of solidarity with the Holy Father is made by postponing Chrism Masses within the Conference.
  - i. Therefore, **we will be postponing the Chrism Mass this year**. Once the restrictions of the pandemic are lifted, the Chrism Mass and the Blessing of Holy Oils and Consecration of the Chrism will take place, with the Bishop, priests and faithful of our dioceses.
  - ii. Until then, the Holy Oils from last year should be retained in parishes.
- f. **Maundy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper** - The Mass of the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated and the faculty to celebrate this Mass without the people is granted to all priests on this day. The Washing of the Feet is to be omitted and there is to be no procession to the Altar of Repose. The reserved Sacrament is to be kept in the Tabernacle. Those

who are not able to celebrate this Mass should pray Vespers from the Liturgy of the Hours.

- i. It is likely that a priest may wish to spend some time in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle. The Archbishops have asked that priests make a **Personal Renewal of Priestly Commitment** at this time using the formula in the document attached.
  - ii. If live-streaming facilities permit, a camera focused on the Tabernacle would allow those at home a sense of watching and praying with the Lord. St Chad's Cathedral in Birmingham will be the focus of national coverage of Watching on Holy Thursday: [www.stchadscathedral.org.uk](http://www.stchadscathedral.org.uk)
- g. **Good Friday** - The Liturgy of Good Friday is to be celebrated, although the Archbishops of England and Wales ask that if it is unrealistic for a priest to celebrate the Liturgy of the Lord's Passion, he should spend time in prayer for his people. This will include the praying of Vespers from the Liturgy of the Hours and also spend time before a Crucifix, where he should pray the Universal Prayers of the Liturgy of Good Friday including the additional prayer given below.
- i. The Holy Father has decreed that a special intention (For the afflicted in time of Pandemic) be inserted before the intercession For those in Tribulation (X). See attachment
  - ii. Note that the Cross can either be veiled or unveiled according to whether the first or second form of the Showing is used. It may be expedient to use the second form for ease.
  - iii. The Congregation for the Eastern Churches has indicated that the traditional collection for the Holy Places of Palestine will be rescheduled to a later date.
- h. **The Easter Vigil** - This should be celebrated in Cathedrals and Parish Churches only. If a priest is unable to celebrate the Easter Vigil, he should pray the prescribed Office of Readings for Easter Day noting the number of readings, chants and prayers to be used.
- i. For those celebrating the Easter Vigil, the preparation of the fire is omitted, and following the Greeting, and usual blessing of the Paschal Candle, it is lit and placed in the candlestick without ceremony and

procession, and the Easter Proclamation (the Exsultet) immediately follows. As there is no procession, it is recommended that this part of the Vigil takes place in the Sanctuary where the Paschal candle is enthroned either in the centre or at the lectern.

- ii. The Liturgy of the Word follows, noting the requirements of the readings, psalms and prayers. The Renewal of Baptismal Promises is made without the blessing of water. For those who are not live-streaming their liturgy, it may be sensible to change the interrogative form of the Renewal of Baptismal Promises into a statement of intent: I renounce.... I believe....
  - iii. This is followed by the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
  - iv. The celebration of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation and Reception into the Church are to postponed. It will be up to each parish priest to decide on a suitable occasion for these to take place as soon as practical once the restrictions are lifted. Catechists and clergy should keep good contact with these members of their communities at this time.
  - v. Those who should have celebrated the Sacraments of Christian Initiation, or to have been received into Full Communion with the Church and confirmed at the Easter Vigil, should be remembered in the Prayer of the Faithful at the Vigil.
- i. **Mass of Easter Day** - All priests should endeavour to celebrate Mass for their people on Easter Sunday.
  - i. The Mass should be as prescribed in the Roman Missal, but without the sprinkling of water as part of the Renewal of Baptismal Promises.
  - ii. BBC Radio 4 and local radio stations will be broadcasting a short Easter Sunday service celebrated by the Cardinal at **08.10 am on Easter Sunday morning**.

***If there are any questions or queries about any of these liturgical directives, please do not hesitate to get in touch.***

## **2. Documents Attached**

1. Text for the **Personal Renewal of Priestly Commitment** to be offered on **Maundy Thursday** during the Watch before the Tabernacle, or at another suitable time in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament
2. **English Text of the Good Friday Particular Intercession** for the Universal Prayers this year *For the afflicted in time of Pandemic*
3. The **Good Friday Particular Intercession (in various languages)**
4. **The Mass Proper in English for *In Time of Pandemic***
5. **Mass Propers *In Time of Pandemic* in various languages** and suggested readings
6. A **Note on the Papal Liturgies** from the Master of Ceremonies regarding Holy Week
7. **Holy Week Transmission from the Vatican** - times of the Papal Liturgies

### 3. **Other Information**

#### a. **Funeral Directors**

Some funeral directors are seeking to have direct cremations with no mourners present. Please remind your local funeral directors that no one should be buried or cremated without dignity or recognition. Priests should be informed of a burial or cremation of someone within their communities, even if there is to be a direct committal, so that the priest (or deacon) can travel in his own car to say prayers, even if this is outside the building. Government guidelines regarding funerals are clear about the need to allow close family and ministers of religion to be present.

#### b. **Hospital Chaplaincy**

We are served across the Archdiocese by a network of hospital and healthcare chaplains, working either full-time or from a parish base. I want to acknowledge the outstanding ministry they have been exercising during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been exemplary and a great source of pride for us all. Thank you to all our healthcare chaplains. Please keep them in your prayers

If you have a hospital chaplaincy in your deanery – and you are not in a COVID-

19 vulnerable category – please consider offering some support to those priests and deacons who are involved in hospital chaplaincy. It would be very helpful to establish some teams of auxiliary chaplains who can offer relief to regular chaplains as their workload increases, and also in case any regular chaplains become ill. Please do not go directly to the hospital, but make contact with the relevant Catholic chaplain to offer assistance. This measure is not to fulfil general chaplaincy duties as such, but to provide specific cover in the case of seriously ill and dying patients who need a priest *in extremis*. If you are able to assist, then please follow the advice given to you from healthcare professionals concerning infection control.

**c. Furloughing of Staff**

As you will know, we have taken up the Government's Job Retention Scheme and furloughed the majority of our staff. This is to seek to ensure employment security and our financial viability moving forward. The Moderator of the Curia and Finance Office have received some enquiries from parish priests about what to do should staff offer to volunteer to undertake some tasks they can do from home. We have to operate within the terms of furloughing and this is not something we should encourage. We should certainly not be asking staff to volunteer. If, however, staff offer to help of their own volition, and it is something they can do at home, we should not refuse their kindness. We are immensely grateful for the co-operation we have received in implementing these measures which will be reviewed at the end of April.

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Through Bishop Paul, Bishop Pat and Canon John O'Toole, working with Mgr Matthew and Canon Richard, together with Paul McCallum and the Clergy Welfare Team, we are working to ensure that we keep in touch with the Deans and with any of our brothers who are vulnerable. If you become aware of any member of the clergy who is unwell or in any kind of need, please pass on the information. We have had a number of priests diagnosed with COVID-19 in the Archdiocese, so please keep them and everyone else affected by it in your prayers, along with all those who battling to overcome its effects. Let us also pray for all the bishops, priests, deacons, religious, laity and seminarians, remembering also our school communities and all those working in the NHS, emergency services, social care, together with all key workers and those in



local and national government.

I read recently these words from a paschal homily by St Gregory Nazianzus, which both challenged and comforted me. They invite us to enter into the drama of Holy Week and make it our own:

*If you are a Simon of Cyrene; take up your cross and follow Christ. If you are crucified beside him like one of the thieves, now, like the good thief, acknowledge your God. For your sake, and because of your sin, Christ himself was regarded as a sinner; for his sake, therefore, you must cease to sin. Worship him who was hung on the cross because of you, even if you are hanging there yourself. Derive some benefit from the very shame; purchase salvation with your death. Enter paradise with Jesus, and discover how far you have fallen. Contemplate the glories there, and leave the other scoffing thief to die outside in his blasphemy.*

*If you are a Joseph of Arimathea, go to the one who ordered his crucifixion, and ask for Christ's body. Make you own the expiation for the sins of the whole world. If you are a Nicodemus, like the man who worshipped God by night, bring spices and prepare Christ's body for burial. If you are one of the Marys, or Salome, or Joanna, weep in the early morning. Be the first to see the stone rolled back, and even the angels perhaps, and Jesus himself.*

I remain united with you, praying for you. Please pray for me.

With every blessing and the assurance of prayers

Yours devotedly in Christ

+ John

Most Rev John Wilson  
Archbishop of Southwark