February 10, 2022

"Even now, says the LORD, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning" (Joel 2:12)

My Brother Priests:

As we prepare for the seasons of Lent and Easter – the Great 90 Days – we are mindful that many who have been absent from our assemblies, mostly due to the COVID pandemic, will be returning to celebrate the Lenten and Easter liturgies. Their continued safety and comfort are of the utmost importance to facilitate and encourage their full, active, and conscious participation in these times of prayer. I encourage parish staff to continue their efforts per the CDC Guidelines regarding sanitation between Liturgies.

The Archbishop and his auxiliaries acknowledge that there is a very significant decline in the number of Covid-19 cases reported at this time. We continue to pray for an end to this pandemic but we also work to assist that end.

The present guidelines recognize that each local situation may be different and offer the opportunity for discretion by the pastor.

However, the Archbishop has not yet authorized the offering of the communion chalice to the assembly.

I ask you, therefore, to please read carefully, the enclosed “General Lent & Easter Guidelines” approved for various elements of these liturgies. If you have any questions, you may contact Dr. Dolores Martinez in our Department of Pastoral Ministries at Dolores.Martinez@archsa.org or (210) 734-1912.

In Jesus,

The Most Reverend Michael J. Boulette, D. Min., V.G.
Auxiliary Bishop of San Antonio
Moderator of the Curia

Enclosure
GENERAL LENT & EASTER GUIDELINES

Lent is a favourable season for opening the doors to all those in need and recognizing in them the face of Christ." -- Pope Francis

Since the need for physical distancing (6ft between persons) is no longer a requirement in liturgical settings, we can return to normal distancing as needed in each setting. In general, it is strongly advised the Presiders and other assisting ministers continue to wear their face masks and sanitize their hands prior to approaching people whether in processions for receiving Ashes, or for Communion, or the imposition of hands during the Scrutinies, or for the Veneration of the Cross. It is recommended that worshippers wear their face masks and sanitize their hands prior to the liturgy.

ASH WEDNESDAY (MARCH 2, 2022)

The Blessing and Distribution of Ashes takes place in the usual manner as found in the Roman Missal. Ashes may be imposed on the forehead marking each person with a cross. You might also have one station for those who wish to receive ashes on the top of the head by sprinkling.

SCRUTINIES

For the Scrutinies, sanitize hands before beginning the Rite of Scrutiny. The Elect may observe some distance between them. They should put on their face mask prior to coming forward to celebrate each of the three scrutinies.

PALM SUNDAY (APRIL 10, 2022)

Palms may be blessed and distributed in the usual manner. An alternate form of distribution is to place palms on a table and allow each worshipper to pick up a palm prior to entering the sanctuary. The palms may be blessed by sprinkling.

HOLY THURSDAY (APRIL 14, 2022)

Washing of the Feet – the priest should sanitize his hands prior to washing feet. While the same basin and pitcher may be used to pour and hold water for all having their feet washed, it is advisable that you have a clean towel for each person to dry their feet.
GOOD FRIDAY (APRIL 15, 2022)

Veneration of the Cross should continue without physical contact with the cross.
In the Universal Prayers, there is to be included a special intention for the sick during the pandemic, those who have died, and for those who feel lost or dismayed during this health emergency.

EASTER VIGIL (APRIL 16, 2022)

For the Easter Vigil, Initiation of the Elect through Baptism and Confirmation:

The Elect to be baptized should put on their face mask prior to approaching for Baptism. Baptism may be administered by pouring water over the forehead of each Elect. Each baptized person should have their own towel to dry their forehead.

Anointing with the Sacred Chrism
- The anointing may take place using a new cotton ball or a cotton pad dipped in the Sacred Chrism for each Confrirmandi and then placed on a tray, or:
- The priest may anoint the Confrirmandi in the usual manner of dipping the thumb in the Sacred Chrism, anointing the forehead and then sanitizing his thumb with a wipe between each person he anoints and the wipe should be placed on a tray.

After Mass, the cotton balls/pad or wipes are to be burned.