



**THE ROMAN CATHOLIC
ARCHDIOCESE OF PORT OF SPAIN**

Health, Safety and Environment Team
c/o Archbishop's House, 27 Maraval Road, Port of Spain

Bulletin #12

**GUIDELINES FOR THE
SEASON OF LENT
AND
HOLY WEEK**

17th February 2021

We must all act responsibly in respect of the COVID-19 Guidelines, thereby ensuring that we do not create risks for our parishioners and the wider public by replacing the official Guidelines with our own Rules.

DISTRIBUTION OF ASHES

To prevent coronavirus disease transmission the distribution of ashes must occur in a manner that avoids direct skin-to-skin contact.

<u>OPTION 1</u>	<u>OPTION 2</u>
The priest/minister sprinkles the blessed ashes on the top of the head of the penitent.	The priest/minister anoints the forehead of the penitent in the sign of the cross with a Q-tip dipped in the blessed ashes

NB Each parish priest should decide which method(s) is best suited to his context and available material and human resources. Each parish is expected to be self-sufficient in this regard, including sourcing Q-tips and establishing proficiency among ministers to distribute ashes.

ROLE OF THE PRIEST

In silence, the priest:

- Blesses the ashes
- Sprinkles the ashes with holy water

The priest addresses the congregation with the words:

- “Repent, and believe in the Gospel.” or
- “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

The faithful respond:

- “Amen”

In silence, the priest:

- Secures his face mask
- Cleanses his hands
- Takes up the vessel of ashes
- Stands at the foot of the altar awaiting the procession of penitents, who remain at least 6 ft apart as they approach to receive ashes

a. Sprinkles the ashes on the top of the head of each penitent.

OR

b. Using a Q-tip, dips one end into the ashes and anoints the forehead of the penitent with the sign of the cross. The priest then immediately disposes of the Q-tip as the penitent moves away. The priest repeats this action using a new Q-tip with each penitent.

NB Once the priest avoids direct physical contact with the penitent, he need not sanitize his hands between penitents.

- At the end of the service the priest returns to the altar and sanitizes his hands.

ROLE OF THE PENITENT

At the invocation by the priest,

- “Repent, and believe in the Gospel.” or
- “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

The penitent responds

- “Amen.”

Prior to processing towards the priest for ashes, each penitent

- Ensures his/her mask fits securely over the nose and mouth
- Removes all/any head covering including shawl, scarf or mantilla to expose the top of the head

Processes towards the altar keeping a 6ft distance behind the person ahead of them in the queue

- Stops in front of the priest, an arm’s length away

a. Bows his/her head reverently and receives the ashes on the top of the head.

OR

b. Keeps head upright and receives the ashes on the forehead which the priest will apply using a Q-tip.

NB There is no exchange of words between priest and penitent during the imposition of ashes.

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

At this time, coordinated mass gatherings for the procession of worshipers on foot is not permitted. If the Stations of the Cross are being prayed inside the church, it is compulsory that no more than three (3) persons lead the prayers while moving between the stations, using a microphone to amplify the sound. Members of the congregation remain in their pew. To observe the required physical distancing, the seat nearest the aisle in each pew should not be occupied so that the two persons leading the prayers will not be too close to those in the pews.

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Mobile devices should not be used to facilitate priest/penitent communication, since this may undermine the validity of the sacrament and also is subject to breaches of the confessional seal. Parish priests should encourage parishioners to avail themselves of this sacrament throughout the Lenten Season by establishing and publishing the regular times and locations when they are available to hear confession.

If hearing confession outside the church building e.g. the home of a penitent who is house-bound or through the car window of another with limited mobility it is necessary to establish a location where confidentiality can be maintained. Priests who are invited to hear the confession of a resident in an elderly care home or patient in hospital **MUST** be guided by the infection prevention protocols of the

institution and exercise every precaution recommended including wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) as required.

There must be no physical contact e.g. hug or handshake. The priest must avoid touching any surfaces within the building. As is the mandate within our local jurisdiction, a nose and mouth covering must be worn by the priest as well as the penitent and a safe, physical distance of 6ft must also be maintained between the two persons at all times.

Where possible, the confession can be heard through an open window or doorway or across two-way glass. Consider too if the sacrament may be postponed to a time when the individual has recovered and is discharged.

DISTRIBUTION OF PALMS

Scientific research confirms that transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from a contaminated surface is significantly lower than direct person-to-person contact. However, as palms are likely to be handled by multiple, unwashed hands between harvest and their final destination, it is the recommendation of the HSE Committee that palms be sanitized before distribution at Palm Sunday masses.

SANITISING PALMS

An alcohol-based solution is suitable and can be dispensed using the fine mist of a plastic spray bottle, atomiser or fogging machine. Sanitizing the palms can be done to the entire collection of palms simultaneously with the branches

- spread out in a thin layer
- on a flat surface
- in a well-ventilated area
- by an adult wearing protective eyewear

at least 60 minutes before distribution to facilitate adequate drying by air.

Members of the hospitality team must perform hand hygiene prior to distributing the sanitized branches which are handed over once worshippers have entered the building, having completed hand hygiene themselves. An adequate supply of hand sanitizer should be available at the entrances at which the palms are being distributed, in the event that there is accidental skin-to-skin contact between the usher distributing the palms and a recipient.

NB: There is to be no procession from the outside of the church to the inside at the start of Palm Sunday Mass.

WASHING OF THE FEET ON MAUNDY THURSDAY

To further reinforce the need for exercising great care at this time there will be NO Washing of Feet on Holy Thursday.

VENERATION OF THE CROSS ON GOOD FRIDAY

In processing towards the Cross, the 6ft physical distance must be observed. There is to be no kissing or touching of the statue or Cross. Those who venerate should do so only with a bow or genuflection.

THE SERVICE OF LIGHT ON GLORIA SATURDAY

Traditionally, in a suitable place outside the Church, a "blazing fire" (rogus ardens) is to be prepared so that the people may gather around it and experience the flames dispelling the darkness and lighting up the night. The rubrics, however, acknowledge that when this cannot be done, adaptations may be made. The Rite

gives the option for a shorter version with a maximum of two or three persons and the priest.

If the Parish Priest wishes to observe this rite during this time of pandemic, only the shorter version must be used. The congregation remains in their pews while the priest and the two or three persons involved will light the candle in the fire outside the church.

Having reached the fire, the celebrant and faithful sign themselves with the sign of the cross while the priest says:

- In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

After this new beginning, he greets the people and then gives the instruction.

As the celebrant blesses the fire he says the prayer with hands outstretched.

The Paschal Candle is brought forward.

The lit candle may then be returned to the altar in the presence of the entire congregation.

SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION ON GLORIA SATURDAY

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) may be held at the Easter Vigil this year. Those who have been prepared may be baptized and confirmed and receive first Holy Communion.

For Baptism, there should be a simple procedure in which fresh water is used for each person being baptized. The water must be poured over the head only. **Immersion is not permitted. The water cannot be recycled and must be disposed of immediately after the ceremony.**

For Confirmation, it is now recommended that the chrism must be applied with a Q-tip to avoid skin-to-skin contact. Please refer to the protocols for the sacrament of Confirmation for further details (HSE Bulletin #9: Nov 2020).

END