



Circular No. 20-15

March 20, 2020

TO ALL THE BISHOPS AND THE DIOCESAN ADMINISTRATORS

Your Eminences, Your Excellencies and Reverend Administrators,

RE: Recommendations for the Celebrations of the Holy Week During the Quarantine Period (2020)

“The greatest mysteries of the redemption are celebrated yearly by the Church beginning with the evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday until Vespers of Easter Sunday. This time is called “the Triduum of the crucified, buried and risen”, it is also called the “Easter Triduum” because during it is celebrated the Paschal Mystery, that is, the passing of the Lord from this world to his Father. The church by the celebration of this mystery, through liturgical signs and sacramentals, is united to Christ her Spouse in intimate communion” (Paschales Solemnitatis no. 38).

The annual celebration of the Paschal Triduum is the apex and heart of the whole liturgical year. This is greatly manifested in the way we celebrate the Holy Week as Filipinos full of faith, life and color. All our parishes take time to prepare for these great celebrations. Filipinos abroad long to be back to the country during this time to experience the life and beauty of the mysteries we celebrate therein. Our national life is truly influenced by these great celebrations.

In this time of Intense Quarantine due to the spread of the COVID-19, almost everything and everyone is affected. Our social, economic and religious life are painfully hit by the “social distancing” that is a necessity this time of pandemic to stem the transmission of the virus.

It is in this context that we are offering all our dioceses these liturgico-pastoral recommendations to keep a balance of the centrality of the celebrations of the Paschal Triduum and the demands of the measures to stem the transmission of the Covid-19. The balance has to be met in the one hand of the essentials of the celebrations and on the other the accommodations due to the precautions to stem the transmission of the virus.

I. We remind all priests that we will continue to celebrate the Holy Week and Paschal Triduum even in the absence of our assembly. The celebrations will be simpler this year because of the absence of our faithful but we will make every effort to keep the dignity and solemnity of our celebrations by following the liturgical form by which the Church has entrusted to us these celebrations. This is in line with our directive in our previous circular.

II. Again we enjoin all to keep the prescribed social distancing, hygiene protocols and sanitation of our spaces for the liturgy.

III. It is beneficial for the people to follow the live streaming of the celebrations. Every diocese is encouraged to live stream their celebrations. The online celebrations should also aim at generating an affinity of the faithful to the local Church. The importance of the domestic/family church stands out during this time. Like the early Church which was a “Domus Ecclesiae” a domestic/family church our families will come together to celebrate the great mysteries of our faith uniting themselves with the local Church through the celebrations transmitted through internet, tv or radio.

IV. Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion: "Misa Sine Populo". We propose two options:

A. For the blessing of Palms, the faithful who will be following the celebration on TV can hold their palm branches (or any available branch of leaves) while the prayer of blessing of Palms is prayed by the Presider. In this case, those who follow the celebration on TV, there is no need for Holy Water to bless the Palm branches.

B. After the Mass the presider can go around the streets of the parish at a previously announced time, to bless the palms without using Holy Water, of the faithful who wait in front of their homes. The priest makes the sign of the cross as he passes through the streets. The blessing with Holy Water might cause commotion. A loud speaker may be used to make people aware that the priest is passing by. The Lector also reads the Passion Narrative along the way. All of these must be done with only two to three ministers to accompany the priests. This is to avoid gathering of people.

V. Holy Thursday

A. Chrism Mass

1. Each Local Ordinary needs to discern on the day and the place of the Chrism Mass. The decision must be done considering the recommendations of the Civil and Health authorities.
2. The celebration will be simplified because of the absence of the faithful, the choir and other lay ministers.
3. Only the clergy will be allowed to be inside the Cathedral/church, observing social distance, hygiene and sanitation of the space for the liturgical celebration.
4. The faithful can follow the celebration through the internet, TV or radio.

B. Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper

1. The Explanatory rite of the "Washing of the Feet" may be omitted or simplified (reduced number of persons whose feet are washed).
2. The altar of repose will be set in the sacristy, a simple tabernacle where the Blessed Sacrament may be reposed.
3. There is an option that after the Mass of the Lord's Supper, without the faithful, the priest with only two or three ministers, will carry the Blessed Sacrament in a Ciborium with humeral veil, rides on a pick up vehicle and goes to all the streets within the parish. This becomes the *Visita Iglesias* of the faithful this year.
4. People with lighted candles wait in front of their homes.
5. Someone may read repeatedly the Gospel Narrative of the Last Supper, during the procession.

VI. Good Friday Veneration of the Cross

1. We offer our faithful reflections on the Passion of the Lord through TV, internet and radio, before the Celebration of the Veneration of the Cross.
2. Please refer to our previous instructions on the proper way of veneration of the Cross.
3. After the Commemoration of the Lord's Passion, without the faithful, the presider in red cope or red stole over a surplice and cassock, rides a pick up vehicle as he carries a Crucifix and goes to all the the streets of the parish.
4. People with lighted candles wait in front of their homes to venerate the Cross by kneeling down.

VII. Easter Vigil

1. We celebrate the Easter vigil following the liturgy prescribed in the Roman Missal. One may reduce the number of readings as allowed by the Missal. We

celebrate this Vigil as the Mother of all Vigils, leading our people to greater hope in the victory of Risen Lord who conquered sin and death. In the experience of the pandemic, the Resurrection of the Lord is the certainty of our victory.

2. The number of needed ministers needs to be regulated also for this celebration, including the choir. If there will be Baptism, only the parents and God-parents should be inside the Church.
3. After the Easter Vigil Celebration, without the faithful, the presider with humeral veil, rides on a pick up carrying the Blessed Sacrament in monstrance, goes around the parish.
4. The parishioners with lighted candles may bring at the door or windows of their homes the statue of the Blessed Mother. This becomes the Salubong of the parish this year.

VIII. The Care of the Poor

1. We need to create programs and systems that will translate the effects of the Celebrations of the Paschal Triduum in our care for the poor among us. The journey of Lent that culminates in Easter forms in us the new man and woman in the risen Lord. He strengthens us to live like him, giving oneself to love others especially the poor and the needy. There are many brothers and sisters of ours who are affected financially by the long quarantine.
2. Concrete actions must be done in this regard in collaboration with our BEC leaders and communities.

Sincerely yours in Christ,


+ ROMULO G. VALLES, D.D.
Archbishop of Davao
President, CBCP