

March 22, 2020

1) Two Prayer Requests for everyone from Pope Francis:

a) March 25, 6 am praying of *Our Father*

Pope Francis has called on all Christian leaders and every Christian community around the world to recite the Our Father in union with him at noon [6 am local time] on Wednesday, the Feast of the Annunciation, as “humanity trembles at the threat” of the coronavirus pandemic “in these days of trial.”

Addressing the faithful through the media from the apostolic palace after reciting the Angelus, March 22, the Pope said that as the prayer will take place “on the day when many Christians remember the annunciation to the Virgin Mary of the Incarnation of the Word, may the Lord hear the unanimous prayer of all his disciples preparing to celebrate the victory of the Risen Christ.”

b) URBI et ORBI Blessing: Friday, March 27, 12 Noon; plenary indulgence

In this time of emergency for humanity, the Holy Father Francis invites Catholics from all over the world to join spiritually in prayer with him next Friday March 27th at 18.00. [12 noon, local time]

The ceremony will consist in readings from the Scriptures, prayers of supplication, and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; and will conclude with Pope Francis giving the *Urbi et orbi* Blessing, with the possibility of gaining a plenary indulgence for all those who listen to it live through the various forms of communication.

All those who spiritually join this moment of prayer through the media will be granted the plenary indulgence according to the conditions provided for in the recent decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary.

2) Sacrament of Reconciliation/Penance:

At this time, Bishop Johnston has directed that **INDIVIDUAL Confessions** heard in **confessional boxes/confined rooms are suspended** effective immediately due to the requirements of combating the coronavirus following the direction of both the Apostolic Penitentiary (See: Note from the Apostolic Penitentiary on the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the current pandemic) and USCCB (See: The Care of Souls and the Forgiveness of Sins During This Pandemic). **Individual confessions may be celebrated** in a well-ventilated area which can provide for social distancing and the confidentiality of the confession. The sacrament of Reconciliation is to be celebrated **inside** the church or spaces of church or parish school buildings which have been prepared for the worthy celebration of the sacrament. As you are able, provide for the anonymity of the penitent if that is possible and desired as an option. Spaces for confession should minimize the likelihood of multiple people touching surfaces which the next penitent might contact.

Also note the USCCB Secretariat of Doctrine and Canonical Affairs in “The Care of Souls and the Forgiveness of Sins During This Pandemic” guidance to the Faithful who are anxious that they do **not have an opportunity for reception of the Sacrament** at this time following:

“However, given public restrictions, the celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation with either individual or general absolution may not be possible. This will make some of the faithful anxious, especially during this Lenten season of penance.

To help in this, the Holy See, through the Apostolic Penitentiary, has offered two recourses for the faithful:

a) “Where the individual faithful find themselves in the painful impossibility of receiving sacramental absolution, it should be remembered that **perfect contrition**, coming from the love of God, beloved above all things, expressed by a sincere request for forgiveness (that which the penitent is at present able to express) and accompanied by *votum confessionis*, that is, by the **firm resolution to have recourse, as soon as possible, to sacramental confession, obtains forgiveness of sins, even mortal ones** (cf. CCC, no. 1452).”

- **perfect contrition requires**

- the love of God
- the sincere desire for forgiveness
- the ardent commitment to receive the sacrament of reconciliation when available

b) “The gift of **special Indulgences** is granted to the **faithful suffering** from COVID-19 disease, commonly known as Coronavirus, as well as to health care workers, family members and all **those who in any capacity, including through prayer, care for them.**”

- This is a **time of suffering**, especially for those who have contracted COVID-19. As such, it may be a time for us to “rediscover ‘the same redemptive suffering of Christ’ (*Salvifici doloris*, 30).”

- Trusting in Christ, a *Plenary indulgence* is “granted to the faithful suffering from Coronavirus, who are subject to quarantine by order of the health authority in hospitals or in their own homes if, with a spirit detached from any sin, they unite spiritually through the media to the celebration of Holy Mass, the recitation of the Holy Rosary, to the pious practice of the Way of the Cross or other forms of devotion, or if at least they will recite the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and a pious invocation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, offering this trial in a spirit of faith in God and charity towards their brothers and sisters, with the will to fulfil the usual conditions (sacramental confession, Eucharistic communion and prayer according to the Holy Father's intentions), as soon as possible.”

- “Health care workers, family members and all those who, following the example of the Good Samaritan, exposing themselves to the risk of contagion, care for the sick of Coronavirus according to the words of the divine Redeemer: ‘Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends’ (Jn 15: 13), will obtain the same gift of the Plenary Indulgence under the same conditions.”

- o An indulgence is “the expression of the Church's full confidence of being heard by the Father when - in view of Christ's merits and, by his gift, those of Our Lady and the saints - she asks him to mitigate or cancel the painful aspect of punishment by fostering its medicinal aspect through other channels of grace” (John Paul II, General Audience, September 29, 1999).

- o A plenary indulgence removes all the temporal punishment due to sin (CCC, 1471).

Promotion and catechesis on these remedies during the absence of the sacrament of reconciliation can be a source of great consolation for all the faithful.” [conclusion of USCCB quotation began at paragraph 3 of number 2]. Please inform your parishioners of the Church’s aid even in this time when staying home and confessing one’s sins privately to God according to the Church’s teaching as presented above.

3) Emergency/Danger of Death Anointings of the Sick and Viaticum (as possible)

- a) For the celebration of the “Last Rites”, however, Viaticum may be given along with the Anointing of the Sick with the observance of the special protocols (e.g., use of fresh oil, cotton balls/Q-tips, and medical gloves and masks).
- b) To prevent the contamination of the Blessed Sacrament, the priest should only bring the amount of Holy Communion necessary for Viaticum.
- c) Hospital chaplains are to be especially attentive to the directions of their medical institution and use prudence in moving from room to room in pastoral visits.
- d) All priests are reminded to offer the Apostolic Pardon (found, for example, #265, small green book *Pastoral Care of the Sick*) with or without a celebration of Anointing of the Sick.

e) Helpful for our own edification and catechesis of the faithful is number 12 of the *Manual of Indulgences: At The Point Of Death*:

§1 a priest who administers the sacraments to someone in danger of death should not fail to impart the apostolic blessing (pardon) to which a *plenary indulgence* is attached.

§2 If a priest is unavailable, Holy Mother Church benevolently grants to the Christian faithful, who are duly disposed, a *plenary indulgence* to be acquired at the point of death, provided they have been in the habit of reciting some prayers during their lifetime; in such a case, the Church supplies for the three conditions ordinarily required for a plenary indulgence.

§3 In this latter case, the use of a crucifix or a cross in obtaining the plenary indulgence is commendable.

§4 The faithful can obtain this plenary indulgence at the hour of death, even if they have already acquired a plenary indulgence on that same day.

§5 The catechetical instruction of the faithful should ensure that they are duly made aware and frequently reminded of this salutary benefaction of the Church.

- 4) **Suspension of Public Masses is also hereby extended** from the previously announced date of April 3 now **through April 24, 2020**, unless retracted.
- 5) **Weddings:** All weddings are to be postponed or rescheduled until at least April 24, 2020; outside of danger of death situations.
- 6) **Funeral Masses:** Where civic restrictions do not forbid funerals, a priest may celebrate a funeral Mass with up to four asymptomatic adults on a Lenten weekday through April 4, 2020. Where civic restrictions do not forbid it, he may celebrate a funeral without Mass with up to four asymptomatic adults on April 9, 10 and 11. Alternatively, the priest may celebrate a Mass for the Dead on a Lenten weekday up to April 8, or on weekdays from April 13-24, and he may then celebrate a funeral Mass for the same deceased person after April 24, pending both governmental directives and permission from the Office of the Bishop.
- 7) **Suspension of the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil:**
 - a) Since there will be no initiation sacraments at the Easter Vigil this year in the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, please plan for either of these options: a) tentatively, if pandemic restrictions are lifted, the bishop grants permission to celebrate the initiation of the elect by Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist at a Pentecost Vigil Mass on May 30, 2020; or b) the priest may celebrate the initiation rites on the first available (hopefully) Sunday in Easter Time when both the local/state/federal government have lifted restrictions *and* the Office of the Bishop permits.
 - b) Likewise, in accordance with Church law, priests may celebrate the Rite of Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church at any time for those adults and children of catechetical age who have a valid baptism in another Christian denomination. Priests may schedule receptions at the earliest opportunity **AFTER** civic restrictions on gatherings have been lifted and the Office of the Bishop confirms that civic lifting for the state/county where the Rite of Reception is to be celebrated.
- 8) **HOLY WEEK**

The faithful should be informed of the times of the private celebration of these liturgies so that they can prayerfully unite themselves in their homes. The means of live (not recorded) televised or internet/live streamed broadcasts are helpful.

- a) Palm Sunday of the Passion of Our Lord
 - ❖ The pastor or another priest should celebrate Mass for the intentions of the people privately with up to four asymptomatic adults to assist the celebration of the liturgy

- ❖ Palms are to be blessed using the second form of the Commemoration of the Lord's Entrance into Jerusalem, but NOT distributed in any manner to the faithful until the Office of the Bishop directs and grants permission.
- b) Holy Thursday, Mass of the Lord's Supper
- ❖ The Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments has granted the exceptional faculty to each priest to celebrate Mass, without the people present, on this day in 2020. As above, the priest may celebrate privately or have up to four additional asymptomatic adults assisting in the vital ministries.
 - ❖ The foot washing option must be omitted.
 - ❖ At the end of the Mass of the Lord's Supper, the procession with the Blessed Sacrament to the place of repose is to be omitted and the Blessed Sacrament is to be kept in the tabernacle.
 - ❖ Priests who are unable to celebrate Mass should instead pray Vespers/Evening Prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours.
- c) Good Friday, Passion of the Lord
- ❖ As above, the priest may celebrate privately or have up to four additional asymptomatic adults assisting in the vital ministries.
 - ❖ In the Universal Prayer, there is to be added EITHER of the options attached. The first is from the USCCB and the second is provided by our KCSJ Office of Divine Worship.
 - ❖ During the Adoration of the Holy Cross, there should be no kissing or touching of the cross. A genuflection or profound bow would be an appropriate sign of reverence.
- d) Easter Vigil
- ❖ As above, the priest may celebrate privately or have up to four additional asymptomatic adults assisting in the vital ministries.
 - ❖ At "The Solemn Beginning of the Vigil or *Lucernarium*," the preparation and lighting of the fire is omitted.
 - ❖ The Paschal Candle is lit; the procession is omitted.
 - ❖ The Easter Proclamation (*Exsultet*) follows.
 - ❖ The Liturgy of the Word takes place according to the rubrics.
 - ❖ For the "Baptismal Liturgy," the "Renewal of Baptismal Promises" alone is necessary (cf. *Missale Romanum*, pg 371, n. 55).
 - ❖ The Liturgy of the Eucharist then follows.
 - ❖ All priests and religious who have absolutely no possibility of uniting themselves to the Paschal Vigil celebrated in a church should pray the Office of Readings for Easter Sunday in the Liturgy of the Hours. Others are likewise invited to pray the Office of Readings in union with Church universal.
- e) Easter Sunday
- ❖ As above, the priest may celebrate privately or have up to four additional asymptomatic adults assisting in the vital ministries.

These guidelines do not address nor anticipate every possible situation. Further advice might be needed in those situations.