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Hello Everyone,

Greetings to you all. I hope you are keeping well in this very unusual time of the coronavirus.

As you know, the current pandemic means that we are unable to have public celebrations of Mass.

One particular question that I have been considering is what we should do regarding the celebration of the **Chrism Mass (Mass of the Oils)**, which we usually celebrate on the Monday of Holy Week.

While we cannot postpone the celebration of the Easter Triduum, we can postpone the Chrism Mass. This was confirmed recently in the attached document from the Congregation for Divine Worship.

In our diocese, the Chrism Mass has a particularly strong communal element, drawing together people from all around the diocese. Not only does this gathering include a renewal of commitment to ministry by our priests. We also include a renewal of commitment to all the varied ministries that serve our diocesan community. So, it seems appropriate to postpone our Chrism Mass till later in the year when we might be free to have our usual diocesan-wide gathering.

I propose postponing the Chrism Mass to about six months time, when I would hope that restrictions because of the coronavirus will have been lifted. Following our usual custom of celebrating the Chrism Mass on a Monday evening, **I propose that we celebrate the Chrism Mass this year at 6:30 pm on Monday, September 21**, the feast of St Matthew, apostle and evangelist.

God bless you all.

Paul Bird CSsR
Bishop of Ballarat

CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS

Prot. N. 153/20

DECREE In time of COVID-19

During this difficult time through which we are living because of the Covid-19 pandemic, and considering the impediment to the community celebration of the liturgy in church as per the direction of Bishops for their territories, a number of queries have come to this Congregation concerning the imminent celebration of Easter. In this regard, the following general indications are offered along with some suggestions for Bishops.

1 – **Concerning the date of Easter.** Easter is the heart of the entire liturgical year and is not simply one feast among others. The Easter Triduum is celebrated over the arc of three days which is preceded by Lent and crowned by Pentecost and, therefore, cannot be transferred to another time.

2 – **The Chrism Mass.** Having evaluated the concrete situation in the different countries, the Bishop has the faculty to postpone it to a later date.

3 – **Indications for the Paschal Triduum.**

Wherever the civil and ecclesiastical authorities have put restrictions in place, the Sacred Triduum must be celebrated in the following way:

Bishops will give indications, which have been agreed with the Episcopal Conference, so that, in the Cathedral and parish churches, though without the physical participation of the faithful, the Bishop and parish priest(s) can celebrate the liturgical mysteries of the Paschal Triduum. The faithful should be informed of the times of the celebration so that they can prayerfully unite themselves in their homes. In this occasion, the means of live (not recorded) televisual or internet broadcasts are helpful.

The Episcopal Conference and individual dioceses will see to it that resources are provided to support family and personal prayer.

Holy Thursday. In Cathedral and parish churches, where and in the measure that there is a real possibility of doing so, established by the one responsible, the priest(s) of the parish can celebrate the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper. The faculty to celebrate Mass on this day in a suitable place, without the people, is granted in an exceptional manner to all priests. The washing of feet, which is already optional, is to 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 of the day (cf. *Liturgia Horarum*).

Good Friday, in Cathedral and parish churches, where and in the measure that there is a real possibility of doing so, established by the one responsible, the Bishop/Parish Priest will celebrate the Passion of the Lord. In the Universal Prayer, the Bishop will see to it that there is a special intention for the sick, the dead, for those who feel lost or dismayed (cf. *Missale Romanum*, pg. 314 n. 13).

Easter Sunday

The Easter Vigil: Is to be celebrated only in Cathedral and parish churches, where and in the measure that there is a real possibility of doing so, established by the one responsible. 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 and the Easter Proclamation (Exsultet) follows. The “Liturgy of the Word” then takes place. 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.

Those 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 (cf. *Liturgia Horarum*).

Decisions regarding monasteries, seminaries and religious communities shall be made by the Diocesan Bishop.

Expressions of popular piety and processions which enrich the days of Holy Week and the Paschal Triduum can be transferred to other suitable days in the year, for example 14 and 15 September, according to the judgement of the Diocesan Bishop.

By mandate of the Supreme Pontiff, for the year 2020 only.

From the offices of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 19 March 2020, on the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church.

Robert Card. SARAH
Prefect

✠ Arthur ROCHE
Archbishop Secretary