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Hello Everyone,

As we look ahead to the ceremonies of Holy Week, some have asked what adjustments would be appropriate in view of the continuing need to keep our communities COVIDsafe.

Since we have resumed the regular celebration of Mass and other ceremonies for some time now, you would have developed practices suited to your local community for these gatherings. For example, you would have your system for people to register when they attend Mass. These practices will continue to be appropriate for the gatherings in Holy Week. However, there are some elements that are distinctive about the rites of Holy Week and I offer a few points of guidance in this regard.

As a general point, I note that when we are not able to keep 1.5 metres distant from others, the government recommends that we wear a mask.

For **Palm Sunday**, the Missal provides **three forms of the opening rite**. The first form involves an outdoor gathering with a blessing of palms, a reading of the gospel of Christ's entrance into Jerusalem and a procession into the church. The second form involves a blessing of palms and a reading of the gospel, but all within the church. In the third form, the Mass simply begins in the usual way, with the priest proceeding to the altar while an opening hymn is sung. You could choose whichever of these three forms seems best suited to your local circumstances. Palms could be handed to people as they register for the Mass.

The Mass of **Holy Thursday** usually includes the **Washing of Feet** after the homily and a **Procession with the Blessed Sacrament** to "a place of repose". In line with directions given by the Congregation for Divine Worship during this time of pandemic, the Washing of Feet and the Procession with the Blessed Sacrament **may be omitted**. The Congregation indicates that the Blessed Sacrament would simply be taken to the tabernacle after communion as usual. This would not rule out providing some time for people to stay for quiet prayer after the Mass, as is the custom particularly on Holy Thursday.

For **Good Friday**, the Congregation for Divine Worship has provided a **prayer related to the time of pandemic**, to be added to the Solemn Intercessions (see below).

The Good Friday ceremony includes **Veneration of the Cross**. For this year, I propose that people be invited to come forward to venerate the cross by **bowing before the cross** rather than by touching or kissing the cross.

I wish you well as you make the arrangements for the Holy Week ceremonies that are appropriate for your community.

May the peace of Christ be with us all as we continue our journey through Lent and come to celebrate Holy Week and Easter.

God bless you all.

Bishop Paul

## **NEW SOLEMN INTERCESSION FOR GOOD FRIDAY**

### **IX b. For the afflicted in time of pandemic (added/approved in 2020 by the Holy See)**

Let us pray also for all those who suffer the consequences of the current pandemic, that God the Father may grant health to the sick, strength to those who care for them, comfort to families and salvation to all the victims who have died.

*Prayer in silence. Then the Priest says:*

Almighty ever-living God,  
only support of our human weakness,  
look with compassion upon the sorrowful condition of your children  
who suffer because of this pandemic;  
relieve the pain of the sick,  
give strength to those who care for them,  
welcome into your peace those who have died  
and, throughout this time of tribulation,  
grant that we may all find comfort in your merciful love.  
Through Christ our Lord.

**R. Amen**