

Dear friends,

January 16, 2021

On Thursday, Jan. 14, Bishop McKnight met with his advisors, which included a discussion about Lent and Easter during the present pandemic. I want to communicate to you all the following information for your liturgical and pastoral planning.

1. First, simply a reminder that the last decree issued by Bishop McKnight regarding the pandemic continues in force. That decree includes a prohibition of the exchange of the sign of peace during Mass. The dialogue between the priest celebrant and the assembly (The peace of the Lord be with you always...And with your spirit.) still takes place, but the following monition, "Let us offer each another the sign of peace" is omitted until further notice.
2. **Blessing of Throats on the memorial of St. Blaise (February 3)** The *Book of Blessings* allows that if, for pastoral reasons, it is better not to bless each individual, then a priest or deacon may give the blessing to all assembled by extending hands, without the crossed candles, over the people while saying the prayer of blessing. This is not to prohibit the individual blessing of throats, but to remind Pastors of this option, which the current circumstances would certainly allow.
3. **Distribution of Ashes on Ash Wednesday (February 17)** During this time of pandemic, the Holy See has modified the method of distributing the ashes, as outlined in the following "Note": *The Priest says the prayer for blessing the ashes. He sprinkles the ashes with holy water, without saying anything. Then he addresses all those present and only once says the formula as it appears in the Roman Missal, applying it to all in general: "Repent, and believe in the Gospel", or "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return". The Priest then cleanses his hands, puts on a face mask and distributes the ashes to those who come to him or, if appropriate, he goes to those who are standing in their places. The Priest takes the ashes and sprinkles them on the head of each one without saying anything.* Notice there is to be no touching the forehead. Because this is a change in the custom for ashes in our country, this should be explained to the assembly beforehand. The distribution takes place at the normal time after the homily, though it can also be done outside of Mass with a word service.
4. **The Rite of Election (February 21, 3PM, Cathedral)** The Rite of Election will take place on the First Sunday of Lent, but it will be restricted to catechumens/candidates, their sponsors, and the Parish RCIA coordinator in order to allow for social distancing in the Cathedral.
5. **Palms on Palm Sunday (March 28)** Because palms are given once to individuals to be kept by them, Bishop McKnight is permitting the use of palms this year for Palm Sunday. Good practice would be for the palms to be distributed by members of the faithful who are masked and wearing gloves. The palms could be sanitized once before distribution begins.
6. **Chrism Mass (Tuesday, March 30)** The Thursday before Holy Thursday this year falls on March 25, and because the Solemnity of the Annunciation outranks the Chrism Mass, the Chrism Mass has been moved to Tuesday of Holy Week. There will be the Mass and a banquet, but no day of reflection. The Bishop does hope to provide confessors for the priests.

7. **Holy Oils:** Bernadette Adams has informed us that the Catholic Center will be happy to accept the bottles of last year's Holy Oils from you, but they must be empty and properly cleansed already. The best way to dispose of the Holy Oils on your own is to burn them (e.g., in the Easter fire at the Vigil) or to bury them on blessed land. The bottles should be washed (using lemon juice is advised) and the water poured down the sacrarium (if your church does not have a sacrarium, then pouring the water out of blessed ground is also allowed). Avoid requesting too much oil for display in larger ambries. Displaying oil that will not be used is not the intent of Holy Oils. If you get a larger container, then please make liberal use of it in the sacraments! The Holy Oils are to be kept with care and in a fitting manner. Reverent and safe custody of the Holy Oils includes keeping them sealed so that they will not be corrupted by foreign objects and in a locked place where they will not be profaned.
8. **Eucharistic Procession on Holy Thursday (April 2)** A reminder that it is prohibited by universal liturgical law to use a monstrance for the Eucharistic procession on Holy Thursday. The Blessed Sacrament must be carried in a ciborium or similar covered and worthy containers.
9. **Adoration of the Cross on Good Friday (April 3)** For the Adoration of the Cross this year, the assembly should be instructed to approach the Cross (a Crucifix is recommended, but not required) and either bow or genuflect, but not to kiss or otherwise touch the Cross.
10. **Baptisms at the Easter Vigil:** If a parish will have more than one Baptism at the Easter Vigil, it is recommended that a pitcher of water be prepared so that fresh water is poured on each catechumen (without the need to dip again into the same pool of water).
11. **Timing of the Easter Vigil:** On April 3, 2021, Nautical Twilight will occur in Jefferson City at 8:32pm. *It is legitimate, therefore, to begin the Easter Vigil at 8:30PM or later in our diocese.*

Thank you for your attention to these matters. If you have questions or concerns, as always, feel free to contact me.

Peace and All Good,

Fr. Dan

DLC Chair