

DIOCESE OF MANGALORE

Telephone : 2440524, 2440525
E-mail : bp.mangalorediocese@gmail.com

BISHOP'S HOUSE, KODIALBAIL
MANGALORE – 575 003
DAKSHINA KANNADA, INDIA.

Ref. No.

Dated

HOLY WEEK AND LITURGICAL LIFE AMIDST COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND LOCKDOWN

We are in the middle of a tempest: Covid-19. The world cries out to God, “don’t you care that we are perishing?” (Mk 4:38) just as the disciples did to Jesus when the boat in which they were travelling was caught in a life-threatening storm. We are facing today, a kind of storm that exposes our vulnerability and uncovers those false and superfluous certainties around which we have constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities. This is a very strange and challenging time for us as a Church, as a country and as a world family.

But we are not abandoned. Evil has an expiry date, but not God and goodness. Jesus asks us: “Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?” As we are about to enter into the Holy Week, we need to address these two issues: our fears and our faith. “Faith begins when we realize we are in need of salvation. We are not self-sufficient; by ourselves we flounder: we need the Lord, like ancient navigators needed the stars.” (Pope Francis). God does not do social distancing. God is with us, accompanying us and healing us, because God loves us.

We are facing an unimaginable Holy Week this year. We’re not cancelling Holy Week. It can never be cancelled; it’s Holy Week! The saving work of Jesus is beyond the ability of anyone to suspend or alter it. What will change, however, is how we celebrate this holy time. But the absence of public worship during these holiest days of the year presents a moment of pause and pain. The void created in our spiritual lives by our lack of access to the sacraments can be seen to draw us closer to Christ’s own solitude in his final agony and suffering. And yet, we cannot remain there. By our Easter faith, we know that Christ is alive and among us. “I am with you always,” he promised (Mt 28:20).

REGULATIONS AND GUIDELINES TO BE OBSERVED IN THE DIOCESE

In accord with the Orders passed by Government Authorities and the total lockdown enforced all over the country until April 14, 2020, it is imperative that we make some changes in our public liturgical celebrations. In the light of the guidelines issued by the Holy See, the CCBI, and some diocesan Bishops, I am issuing some fresh regulations and guidelines, especially concerning the Holy Week ceremonies.

I. GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. All Masses – whether on weekdays or Sundays - and Liturgical celebrations whether inside or outside the church building are suspended until further order with the exception of Masses celebrated by the priest alone and without the physical participation of the faithful.
2. The Government has ordered all the places of worship to be closed and no congregational prayers and ceremonies to be conducted. The faithful are to be informed

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that churches/chapels will not be open for the usual devotional visitation of churches/Blessed Sacrament on Holy Thursday evening and Good Friday whether for silent adoration, private prayer or the way of the cross. Parish Priests should take care that they do not leave their churches open at this time.

3. The measures to restrict access to churches and chapels are not borne out of fear but because of our concern for our own good and the good of others, and as a means to control the spread of the coronavirus. It is a measure borne not only out of obedience to the civil and ecclesiastical orders but also as an act of charity and our sacrificial contribution to the promotion of health and life.
4. Even though the Holy Week and Eucharistic Liturgies will be celebrated in private and in the absence of an assembly, every effort must be made to keep the dignity of these celebrations, by following the liturgical norms and forms the Church has prescribed with regard to them.
5. When a priest offers Mass without a congregation due to the circumstances of the celebration, with perhaps only one person present and maybe even no one present, there is the temptation to be perfunctory and hurried. The habit of spiritual preparation for Mass and thanksgiving after Mass deserves renewed attention. An attentiveness to the liturgical setting and furnishings, the sacred vestments and sacred vessels, the manner of prayer and proclamation, all combine to support a prayerful celebration of the mysteries of Christ in Mass without a congregation.
6. Priests are to continue to celebrate private Mass daily, remembering the efficacious nature of the Mass even without the presence of the faithful and to fulfill Mass intentions which have been allocated. Parish Priests and Parochial Administrators are reminded of their obligation to offer the Sunday Mass for the people of the parish (*Missa pro populo*).
7. It is not necessary for every priest or parish to make efforts to have their liturgies telecast or transmitted via electronic/internet media. Priests should inform the faithful regarding the live broadcasts available in the media.
8. Keeping in mind the need to avoid needless proliferation of live telecast and recording of liturgies, when priests live stream the Masses and other liturgical services to the public, they need to follow the guidelines: (a) The Eucharist should be celebrated by only one Priest; thus, there is no scope for concelebration; (b) there should not be more than four persons including the celebrant and the technicians – as section 144 is in operation; (c) no one should be called from their homes to fulfil a liturgical role in the Mass or religious service considering the restrictions of a lockdown; (d) during livestreamed liturgies, the doors to the church will be secured to prevent people from gathering.
9. The online Eucharistic and liturgical celebrations should also aim at fostering a sense of belonging of the faithful to the local Church. The importance of the family as domestic Church stands out during this time. Like in the early Church, our families

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should be exhorted to come together to celebrate the great mysteries of our faith, uniting themselves with the local Church through the celebrations transmitted via the internet, television or radio. Kindly exhort the families to give greater importance to the reading of Scripture connected with the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Our Lord.

II. HOLY WEEK LITURGY

1. Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

- a) Keeping strictly to the requirement that there is no congregation assembled, and ensuring that lectors, altar servers and the celebrant together number no more than 4, and meticulously observing the prevailing directives regarding social distancing and hygiene, the Commemoration of the Lord's Entrance into Jerusalem is to be celebrated within sacred buildings; the second form given in the *Roman Missal* is to be adopted in Cathedral churches, while the third form is to be used in Parish churches and in other places.
- b) Blessed palms would not be distributed to the faithful/parishioners under any circumstances at this time. They can be distributed at a later date that will be designated - tentatively Pentecost Sunday; so, all parishes can distribute blessed palms on the same day.

2. Holy Thursday

- a) The washing of the feet, which is already optional, is to be omitted.
- b) At the end of the Mass, the procession with the Blessed Sacrament to the place of Repose is to be omitted and the Blessed Sacrament is to remain in the Tabernacle.
- c) On this day priests are granted the exceptional faculty to celebrate Mass in a suitable place, without the presence of the people.

3. Good Friday -The Celebration of the Passion of the Lord

- a) In the liturgical celebration of the Passion of the Lord without the physical presence of the faithful, during the Universal Prayer, a special intention is made for those who find themselves in distress, the sick and the dead (cf. *Roman Missal*).
- b) Addition to Solemn Intercessions: XI. For an end to the pandemic
*Let us pray, dearly beloved, for a swift end
to the coronavirus pandemic that afflicts our world,
that our God and Father will heal the sick,
strengthen those who care for them,
and help us all to persevere in faith.*

Prayer in silence. Then the Priest says:
*Almighty and merciful God,
source of all life, health and healing,*

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*look with compassion on our world, brought low by disease;
protect us in the midst of the grave challenges that assail us
and in your fatherly providence
grant recovery to the stricken,
strength to those who care for them,
and success to those working to eradicate this scourge.
Through Christ our Lord. R. Amen.*

- c) The Adoration of the Holy Cross, by kissing it, shall be limited solely to the Celebrant.
- d) The Holy Cross could then be held elevated higher for a brief time for adoration by others, who are participating through the electronic media.
- e) As no public veneration of the Cross or Way of the Cross can be held on Good Friday, these may be scheduled on a later occasion, for example on September 14, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

4. Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday

- a) The liturgy of the Easter Vigil is to be celebrated only in the Cathedral and in Parish churches.
- b) The Blessing of the Easter Fire and the preparation of the Paschal Candle are to be omitted. In other words, the Easter candle is lit without the blessing of the fire and the procession.
- c) After lighting the Easter candle, the *Exsultet* (Easter Proclamation) is sung. Then, the Liturgy of the Word. The number of readings may be reduced, as prescribed in the *Roman Missal*.
- d) After the homily, go directly to the Renewal of Baptismal Promises. The Blessing of the Font and Sprinkling with Holy Water are to be entirely omitted this year. The Prayer of the Faithful follows the Renewal. The liturgy of the Eucharist then follows.
- e) The usual blessing and distribution of Holy Water will also not take place on Holy Saturday or Easter Sunday. Holy Water can be blessed and distributed to the faithful on another occasion, such as, Pentecost Sunday.

III. OTHER LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS

- a) **Anointing of the Sick:** As pastors of people who are called upon to bring spiritual comfort to the sick, Priests cannot afford to refuse this ministry. At the same time, take necessary precautions. Be sure to keep hand sanitizers and face masks handy when you go for sick calls. Do not contaminate the sacred oil. For each anointing, use a new cotton ball and new oil on the cotton. (You are also permitted to use the cotton ball, and not your thumb, to anoint the head.) In the case of pastoral necessity, the hands do not need

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to be anointed. Make sure to then remove the cotton from the stock and properly burn it at a suitable time.

- b) **The Chrism Mass** has been postponed for another date/time with the renewal of priestly commitment and the blessing/consecration of oils occurring at that time. In the meantime, Priests should use the oils consecrated at the Chrism Mass of 2019. If a priest runs out of the Oil of the Sick/Infirm, he should bless new oil according to the formula given in the *Rite of the Anointing of the Sick*.
- c) **Weddings and Baptisms:** The current situation requires us to postpone all gatherings including weddings and baptisms. The only exception would be for a private baptism when there is a grave danger of death. In case weddings are held with due regard to restrictions placed by the civil authority, they are to be conducted outside the Mass as the public celebration of Masses is suspended even on Sundays and Holy Week.
- d) **Sacrament of Reconciliation /Confession:** In the present situation, it is not advisable to hear individual confessions. If an individual penitent persistently requests for confessional opportunity, take utmost precautions and advise the penitent to do the same. The confessional grill is not recommended on account of close proximity between the priest and the penitent. Keep at least 4 feet distance from the penitent and use masks. Confessions are to be heard in a spacious place and properly ventilated, without prejudice to absolute attention to safeguarding of the sacramental seal and the necessary discretion.

Where the individual finds himself/herself in the painful impossibility of receiving sacramental absolution because one cannot come out of the house or a priest is not available for this purpose (as is the case in present situation), it should be remembered that (a) *perfect contrition* coming from the love of God, (b) expressed by a sincere request for forgiveness from God, and (c) accompanied by *the firm resolve to have recourse to sacramental confession as soon as possible*, obtains forgiveness of venial and mortal sins (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1452).

- e) **Funerals:** No Funeral Mass is to be offered in the parish church or chapel until the lockdown and other restrictions are lifted. Kindly advise the family members of the deceased to restrict attendance only to close relatives and friends. The body is taken to the cemetery where all the Funeral Prayers can be said before the burial. Kindly see that the people observe proper social distancing. In case of death due to a suspected corona virus infection, avoid any physical contact with the body. Please assure the family that once the crisis is over, the Memorial Mass for the deceased will be offered in the church.

IV. EXHORTATION TO PRIESTS

- a) **Priestly Renewal and Prayer:** Priests have more free time at their disposal during this lockdown period when compared to other working days. I invite Priests to use this time more productively for growth in spiritual life and pastoral zeal. Please don't spend more time on social media and other futile activities, which are spiritually draining,

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psychologically harmful, emotionally injurious and morally weakening. Instead, allot more time for personal prayer, Eucharistic adoration, spiritual reading, doing physical exercise and to take sufficient rest.

- b) **Administrative-Office Work:** Parish Priest can make use of this time to update and put in order the files, records and registers of the parish and institutions. The sacramental records, record of pastoral activities, parish history, etc. is a testimony to events blessed by 'the living God who acts in history'. A proper maintenance of books, files and records of the parish/institution helps to preserve an institutional memory of those things that are central to the Church's spiritual mission.
- c) **On Scheduling Programmes:** The lockdown is scheduled to end on April 14, Easter Tuesday. But seeing what is happening around, one cannot be sure; therefore, we need to prepare ourselves psychologically for an extended lockdown. Hence, Priests are advised not to schedule any Baptisms, First Communions, Weddings and other liturgical, socio-religious public gatherings immediately after April 14 as it wouldn't be prudent to do so.
- d) **Encourage Liturgical Life at Home:** Our families are 'domestic churches' where the Faith is lived out mostly from day to day: we can connect ourselves more closely to the Church's liturgical life. This can be done even in simple ways, particularly by setting aside a special place to pray. One common practice in homes is to have a domestic prayer altar with a simple cloth, a crucifix or other sacred images, or a candle.

While participating in the liturgical celebrations and other devotional acts through the media, it is highly desirable that the faithful come together as a family in their proper home, dress appropriately, switch off other gadgets that could disturb them, recite the prayers / responses and join in the singing of hymns.

- e) **Concern for the Poor and the Afflicted:** "Experts say that we should wash our hands to avoid being contaminated by the virus and to avoid spreading it. At the trial of Jesus, Pontius Pilate called for water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, declaring as he did, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just man. The responsibility is yours' (Mt 27:24). We should wash our hands, but not the way Pilate did. We cannot wash our hands of our responsibility towards the poor, the elderly, the unemployed, the refugees, the homeless, the health providers, indeed all people, creation and future generations" (Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, Reflections with Vatican News, 26 March 2020). Moreover, faith and good works should go hand in hand. "Prayer and quiet service: these are our victorious weapons" (Pope Francis).

Catholics have always joined together in prayer during times of plague throughout the ages, ministered to the sick, fed the hungry, attended to the dying and buried the dead. We should be reaching out to our communities and praying in solidarity with the Church around the world. Let us make the people feel that the Church is always with them, caring for them as a provident mother. As many of the priests, religious and lay faithful have been doing a great service through various organizations, associations and people

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of good will, I encourage you to serve the people using all the means available and seeking help from those people of good will who could afford it.

V. INFORMATION

- a) I will be celebrating the Holy Week Liturgy at the Cathedral which will be streamed live in divine word tv; daijiworld, and diocesan website. The schedule of liturgical celebrations is as follows:

Palm Sunday (April 5):	7.45 a.m.
Holy Thursday (April 9):	6.00 p.m.
Good Friday (April 10):	5.00 p.m.
Way of the Cross:	11.00 a.m.
Holy Saturday (April 11):	7.00 p.m.
Easter Sunday (April 12):	8.00 a.m. (at Our Lady of Dolours, Kodialbail)

- b) All public programmes of the Bishop including conferral of Ordination to the Priesthood scheduled in the month of April stand postponed to a date to be announced later.

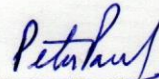
This year Lent crowned with COVID -19 obliged all to penitential practices of self-denial and social distancing. This combined period “is teaching us all a lesson to learn to become ‘spiritual beings with a human nature’ instead of living as ‘human beings with spiritual nature.’ I am reminded of The Book of Genesis, of the lockdown of Noah and his family for forty days and nights in an Ark. There were no balconies, terraces, no internet, no phones, no TV, no YouTube or Netflix. They lived together and loved each other. COVID -19 has dominated the period of Lent in February and March, preceding Easter and has made the Noah’s lockdown to repeat itself, causing the citizens of the world to come together and discover the potential of mutual care and commitment” (Fr J. Felix Raj, SJ).

I know this is an unprecedented time in our life. But unprecedented challenges bring unprecedented graces. Humanity itself is on the way of the Cross and the Church should accompany it to the joy of resurrection: a new humanity with new consciousness of our fragility and need for solidarity/communion with God.

Please know of my prayers for you, all the people in the diocese of Mangalore, and our whole nation during these days. Through the intercession of Mary our Mother, health of the sick and comforter of the afflicted, may the Lord bless us, heal us and comfort us.

Issued from the Episcopal Curia, Mangalore, on April 01, 2020.




✱ Peter Paul Saldanha
Bishop of Mangalore