



ARCHCONFRATERNITY OF ST STEPHEN NOTES ON HOLY WEEK 2021 (ENGLAND AND WALES)

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (CBCEW) have issued special guidance for the celebration of the Holy Week liturgies in 2021 due to the ongoing pandemic. These are one-time special instructions valid for 2021 only and are based on those issued by the Holy See in February 2021, reflecting the anticipated situation in the England and Wales at the end of March and beginning of April 2021 when Holy Week occurs.

Having missed serving at the 2020 Holy Week services and Masses, and much of 2020 overall, this is a good opportunity for Servers to begin to return to their ministry if they have not already had the opportunity and can do so in a safe way. CBCEW's special guidance titled "Vade Mecum for Holy Week 2021 cautiously permits altar servers' participation because *"of the nature of the Holy Week Liturgies"* as part of *"a small number of ministers to assist the priest... chosen to be "present in the sanctuary during the liturgies"*.

This document seeks to examine the provided guidance and attempt to apply its recommendations and rules to the ministry of Altar Serving at the Ordinary Form of the Mass.

Disclaimers

- This document is not to be taken as guidance or a list of what is permitted or not permitted, you must consider what is possible and sensible in your own church considering your own risk assessments, the available physical space, and the number capability of the Servers you have available to you etc. This is just some notes and observations and is not exhaustive.
- You should read the Holy Week guidance document for yourself and if you are not already familiar with it, the directions for Mass at this time. References at the end of this document.
- This document does not cover other areas of the UK such as Scotland and Northern Ireland, which have different Episcopal Conferences and governments, or any other countries.

You should also take into account any additional local guidance from your Diocese, that of the national (and in the case of Wales, regional) Government, Health Authorities and the current state of the pandemic in your area.

- While the pandemic threat is, at the time of writing, diminishing in most areas of England and Wales, it is still especially important that all regulations and guidance continue to be adhered to. Servers should always be models to imitate in whatever they do, and their adherence to the COVID-19 regulations and best-practice is no different.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

- The Holy Week guidance makes reference to Altar Servers (“ministers”) (page 2, paragraph 2) stating:
 - *“Because of the nature of the Holy Week Liturgies, a small number of ministers to assist the priest is permitted. These should be chosen so that a minimum number of assistants are present in the sanctuary during the liturgies.”*
 - The key point here is that the number of Servers should be kept to the minimum required to successfully execute the liturgy. Consider then, if you normally have a large number of Servers during Holy Week, how you will ensure equal serving opportunities to all those who wish to serve over the course of the week.
- Considering your church facilities, the people available, and the importance of this “The Great Week”, the high point of the liturgical year, it may be appropriate to add some dignity to the celebration through additional Serving roles you may have recently excluded, if it can be done safely.
- Consider how you will prepare Servers for these liturgies’ whilst maintaining Social Distancing.
- Consider that reusable Holy Week orders of service cannot be used. Your parish should produce one-time use leaflets or encourage people to bring their own materials. You may want to provide your servers with orders of service even if you do not provide them to the congregation, so they are ready to act at the right time.
- Page numbers quoted here refer to the Roman Missal, but the same text can also be found on the equivalent pages in the CTS Sunday Missal and the Holy Week Missal.

PALM SUNDAY

The following aspects of the usual Palm Sunday Mass are omitted:

- Procession with the people from a place outside the church. The second form of the entrance must be used, inside the church (nothing to occur outside).

In addition, the following aspects are changed or added:

- The long form of the Passion Gospel should not be used.
- The people's parts of the Passion Gospel ("Crucify Him!" etc.) should not be proclaimed by the congregation.
- Palms should be distributed as people leave the church, not as they enter. Those distributing them should wear single use gloves.

Thoughts

- Ordinarily the Missal provides three options for the start of this Mass:
 - "The Procession" (pg 297) from "a smaller church or other suitable place", perhaps a parish hall or an area outside the church (pg 297, rubric 2), and after a short liturgy the people follow the Servers and the clergy in procession to the church (the first form).
 - "The Solemn Entrance" (pg 308), the people enter the church with the people already assembled and the Servers and clergy go to the door or some other place in the church which is not the Sanctuary and begin the same liturgy from there before proceeding to the Sanctuary (the second form).
 - "The Simple Entrance" (pg 309), this form simply omits the whole entrance liturgy and begins the Mass as normal (the third form).
- The guidance states that the second form of the entrance procession is to be used this year which conveniently addresses most the needs of this year. This may be what you are already used to if your church does not ordinarily practice a procession from another place into church with the people, however, consider that your usual place may not be suitable this year.
- You will need to decide where this is to take place and how the Servers and the clergy will get to and from that place whilst maintaining social distancing.
- Once at the designated place, you will need to ensure that there is sufficient space for the Servers and clergy to stand whilst maintaining social distancing.
- You will probably not want this place to be the main entrance to the church as it is likely people may still be arriving when you start this liturgy. Not only might this be undignified, but it may cause social distancing issues.
- The Palms of the people will be blessed; however, they will not be held by the people, they will collect them when they leave the church. As such they will need to be laid out in some fashion in the place where this is to occur so they can be blessed with the Holy Water.

- Consider how, if present, the Server with the Holy Water and priest will socially distance themselves. A lectern will be needed for the Missal. Alternatively, Holy water could be placed on a table beside the palms so that a server does not have to hold the aspergelium or the holy water bucket.
- Note that as is usual at this Mass, the Penitential Rite is not used and once at the Sanctuary the Mass proceeds straight into the Collect and other than the Passion Gospel is as a normal Sunday Mass.
- Remember that at this Mass, due to the use of the lengthy Passion Gospel, no Servers are required to hold candles during it.
- Consider, as they are socially distanced already, and may have more ready access to microphones and hand sanitiser than the congregation, involving the Servers in the reading of some of the parts of the Passion.
- Consider that the blessed Palms may need to be moved to the exits of the church for collection as people leave, from the place where they were blessed sometime during the Mass.
- This Mass has its own preface (pg 311-312).

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Chrism Mass

This is normally only celebrated in Cathedral Churches and it is at the discretion of your Bishop how this is to proceed. It may be moved to an earlier or later date. As this Mass only occurs once in each Diocese, most Servers will not need to concern themselves with it.

Mass of the Lord's Supper

The following aspects of the usual Mass of the Lord's Supper are omitted:

- The washing of the feet
- The procession to the Altar of Repose (the Blessed Sacrament will be reserved in the Tabernacle)
- Stripping of the Altar (during Mass)
- Periods of watching after Mass.

In addition, the following aspects are changed or added:

- A short period of silent prayer of the Clergy and Servers at the end of the Mass before returning to the Sacristy is suggested.

Thoughts:

- As is usual:
 - The Tabernacle should be empty before this Mass begins, with new Hosts consecrated for use at this Mass and on Good Friday (pg 330, rubric 5).
 - The Gloria returns for this Mass, bells can be rung during it but consider that as there will be no singing, if the ringing of bells would "drown out" the congregation. After the Gloria there is no further ringing of bells/gongs until the Gloria returns at the Easter Vigil.
 - The Creed is not said (pg 332, rubric 13), so the Altar should be prepared immediately following the homily.
- For Servers, the omission of the above aspects simplifies the Mass considerably. Without these parts it is almost indistinguishable from a Sunday Mass.
- As the Blessed Sacrament is not going to process to the Altar of Repose in procession, it is placed in the Tabernacle as at a normal Mass and not left on the Altar (pg 344, rubric 35).
- Consider how, if it is to be implemented, the period of silent prayer is to be accomplished in lieu of the usual Eucharistic Procession. There is no dismissal at this Mass as the three services of the Triduum are treated as one celebration. Therefore, after the post-communion prayer and any brief announcements the recessional procession takes place. An idea may be that as the Servers and clergy line up to leave the Sanctuary and genuflect in the normal way, they instead kneel at the front of the Sanctuary in silent prayer briefly before rising, genuflecting and withdrawing to the Sacristy in silence.
- This Mass has its own preface (pg 336-337).

GOOD FRIDAY

Stations of the Cross

If it is common practice in your church to hold this liturgy on Good Friday sometime before the main afternoon service, then it is conducted without the people or the celebrant moving around the church. Therefore, there is little need for Servers at this service and they should participate as part of the general congregation. However, if the celebrant does choose to travel around the church, they could possibly be accompanied on this pilgrimage by a Cross Bearer, only, whilst observing the guidelines on Social Distancing.

The Celebration of the Passion of the Lord

The following aspects of the usual Good Friday service are omitted:

- The Veneration of the Cross by the congregation

Thoughts:

- The guidance asks that churches consider the timing of their services so people who need to use public transport to and from the church can avoid peak periods. As this liturgy is held normally at 3pm (pg 347, rubric 4) it may be that this year it is moved to a different time to avoid people having to travel home at around 4pm / “rush hour”. This may be especially true in cities where public transport use may be more common than personal transport.
- It is also suggested that this service could be offered at several different times rather than just the one celebration, this may be especially appropriate for smaller churches which may not currently have the capacity to accommodate all those who wish to attend at one time. If this is what will happen at your church, you will need to consider how these will all be served.
- For many servers, this is often the most complicated liturgy of the year to plan and serve as it bears little resemblance to an ordinary Mass. This year there is no reprieve, as other than encouraging the service to proceed in as quick but dignified a manner as possible, there is only one major change which is that only the clergy will venerate (kiss) the Cross, the congregation (and servers) will make another gesture from their place such as a genuflection or silent prayer.
- For the entrance consider how the Servers will socially distance while kneeling after the procession into church from the Sacristy. Also consider the placement of the Missal for the opening prayer which the priest says immediately after rising from the prostration. It may be best to follow the option here of this being proclaimed from the chair after the Servers and others have taken to their places.
- The Passion Gospel is again proclaimed, the suggestions for this from Palm Sunday are valid here also.
- Rubric 13 on page 348 is activated for this special time of need with the inclusion of a special prayer for those suffering due to the pandemic inserted between prayers 9 and 10.
- For the Showing of the Cross, the second form mentioned in the Missal (pg 363) is advised. The use of Servers to accompany the Cross with the processional candles is not mentioned in the guidance and is prescribed in the rubrics so is a local decision. If used, ensure that this is done in a socially distant manner, especially if the person holding the Cross also speaks/sings the words “Behold the wood of the

Cross...”, Servers with processional candles could be added if this can be done safely. An idea may be for a cantor to speak/sing the words instead from a socially distanced location.

- Consider the request of rubric 22, pg 371 for candles to be placed on the Altar for the Rite of Holy Communion. Four candles would normally be used - two from the procession with the reposed Blessed Sacrament and the two which were used during the adoration of the Cross (rubric 17, pg 364).
- As there is no physical adoration by the congregation, the Cross should be placed at the Altar once it has been venerated by the clergy per rubric 19, pg 364.
- As usual there is no Liturgy of the Eucharist on this day and the hosts consecrated on the previous day are used. The liturgy jumps straight to the Communion Rite starting at the Lord’s Prayer after the Adoration of the Cross and the Altar has been prepared with a Corporal and Missal. No Bells or Gongs.
- The guidance makes no mention of the Blessed Sacrament being brought into church from another place at the start of the Communion Rite. Ordinarily the Tabernacle would be empty, and the Blessed Sacrament would have been reposed in another place. Presumably, this is up to local discretion and the Blessed Sacrament may simply be in the Tabernacle per the instruction for the previous day.
- Typically, if the Blessed Sacrament is to be transferred it would be accompanied by a pair of processional candle bearers (pg 371, rubric 22). If this is to be the case in your church, you must consider how the Servers will socially distance themselves from each other if they are not in a ‘social bubble’, and they should always maintain social distancing from the priest as usual. The Priest or Deacon will also require a Humeral Veil for the transfer, it is suggested that a Server does not assist with the donning of this so to maintain social distancing.
- The rubrics allow the Blessed Sacrament to be reserved in the Tabernacle after Communion rather than taken to another place of repose as may be customary, which may be a simpler solution (rubric 29, pg 373).
- The service closes as it normally does, in silence after the Post Communion prayers.

HOLY SATURDAY

The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night

The following aspects of the usual Easter Vigil are omitted:

- Its celebration in churches that are not the Parish Church or a Cathedral
- The lighting of the Easter fire
- The Lucernarium (the procession with the newly lit candle, “Lumen Christi...” etc.)
- The use of votive candles in the hands of the faithful.
- Baptisms, Receptions and Confirmations (recommendation).
- Sprinkling of the congregation with the newly blessed Holy Water.
- Refilling of the entrance stoups (which should still be out of use due to the pandemic).

In addition, the following aspects are changed or added:

- The process of lighting the Paschal Candle is changed.
- The shorter form of the Exultet is preferred.
- Fewer readings than usual are permitted and advised.

Thoughts

- As the Mass should not begin before sunset (approx. 19:30-20:00 in the UK in 2021) there should not be too many concerns about the timing of this Mass and the request to avoid busy public transport times.
- In a parish where there are several churches, there should only be one celebration in the parish church, this is most likely common place already and is not actually a pandemic condition, the rubrics of the Roman Missal state this every year (pg 329, rubric 3). Still, it is worth noting for places that may, for just cause, have multiple celebrations of this Mass in their parish, especially due to the pandemic.
- There are two choices for the lighting of the Paschal Candle this year. In both cases it is lit without ceremony. It is either done:
 - before people arrive
 - or
 - simply lit at the very start of the Mass without saying anything (no “Lumen Christi” etc.).
- An idea may be that the Candle enters in the short procession to the Sanctuary from the Sacristy with a Server who continues to hold the candle on arrival at the Sanctuary while the priest lights it and then installs it in the stand for the priest, to avoid passing it between them. If a Deacon is present it may be more appropriate for him to undertake this task rather than a lay Server. If the candle is passed between people, then those involved should sanitise their hands afterwards.
- In both cases, the incense grains should already be inserted and the candle otherwise prepared per the instructions in the omitted liturgy of the preparation of the candle.

- If the candle is going to be lit in public at the start of the Mass, there will need to be some way of lighting it in a safe and dignified way (something more dignified than a cigarette lighter or box of matches for example).
- Remember also the dangers of mixing fire and freshly sanitised hands.
- The readings are done in an expedited way. As the church should be in (near) darkness, consider how these changes may affect your usual processes for lighting the required areas during the Exsultet and Liturgy of the Word, timings may be different than usual. Rubrics 20 and 21 on pg 397 do not apply at this time and the new guidance for the choice of readings should be followed instead.
- The usual process of lighting the altar / candles after the final reading/psalm/prayer should be followed.
- As there will be no singing of the Gloria, consider if the use of bells during it is appropriate as per Maundy Thursday notes.
- If it is to be used, as it was not lit at the beginning from the Easter Fire, then the Thurible should have been lit ready for use towards the end of the readings, ready for use at the Gospel.
- The blessing of the Holy Water after the Gospel would usually involve at least two servers, one Book Bearer with the Missal and one with the Paschal Candle.
 - The book bearer should not be a role in present times due to the need to maintain social distancing from the celebrant who will likely not be wearing a face-covering, therefore a suitable lectern or stand for the priest to place the Missal on for this part of the liturgy should be provided. A Server could move this into position and back again if required.
 - The candle would normally be inserted into the water three times during the blessing, however rubric 46 on pages 411-412 states that this is optional. It may decomplicate things social distancing wise to omit this. If it is to be performed, consider what precautions you may take between the Server and priest for example, both sanitising hands before and after that part of the liturgy.
- Like on Palm Sunday, the process of a Server and the celebrant moving around the church sprinkling the people with the newly blessed Holy Water after the Renewal of Baptismal Promises is omitted.
- The Creed is omitted so after the Renewal of Baptismal Promises the Altar should be prepared for the Offertory.
- The rest of the Mass from this point continues as normal following your current standard procedures for Mass.
- Preface 1 of Easter is used (pg 592).

EASTER SUNDAY

The following aspects are omitted:

- Sprinkling of the congregation with the newly blessed Holy Water.

Thoughts

- This will look very similar to that of a standard Sunday Mass other than the addition of the Renewal of Baptismal Promises which takes the place of the Creed, after the Homily.
- For the Renewal of Baptismal Promises knowing that the use of a Server as Book Bearer is not possible, consider where the priest may want to direct this from, for example the Altar, Chair or another place and if anything needs to be moved into position by a Server ready for this.
- The Creed is omitted so after the Renewal of Baptismal Promises the Altar should be prepared.
- Remember that there is a Sequence before the Gospel.
- Preface 1 of Easter is used (pg 592).

With our prayers and best wishes,

Central Council
Archconfraternity Guild of St Stephen

REFERENCES

1. CBCEW Vade Mecum for Holy Week 2021 of 28th February 2021.
<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/home/our-work/health-social-care/coronavirus-guidelines/guidance-collective-worship/guide-for-holy-week-2021/>
2. General Guidance for Mass during the COVID-19 pandemic
<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/home/our-work/health-social-care/coronavirus-guidelines/guidance-collective-worship/mass-covid-19-guidance/>
3. COVID-19: guidance for the safe use of places of worship and special religious services and gatherings during the pandemic (England only)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july>