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Circular 69/2020

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Guidelines for the Celebration of Holy Week Liturgies in 2020

Dear and Rev Fathers,

Glory to God in the highest, Amen.

We are living in a difficult time because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given that the date of Easter cannot be transferred, and restrictions around the gatherings and movement of people have been imposed, it is decided that **priests may celebrate the rites of the Holy Week without the presence of the faithful.** However, the faithful should be informed of the time of the celebrations so that they can prayerfully unite themselves in their homes and join in when there is livestreaming of services which can be of great help. Please remind your respective communities to dedicate adequate time to prayer as **Easter is at the heart of the entire liturgical year and is not just one feast among others.**

In the context of the impediment to the community celebration of the liturgy in churches as per the direction of civil authorities, the following guidelines are being offered concerning the imminent celebration of Easter which should be in total accordance with the measures established by the authorities for the containment of the corona virus.

Palm Sunday: ♦The palms will be blessed on Palm Sunday itself and should be kept in the Churches to be distributed to the faithful when they are permitted to attend church services once the threat passes and the restrictions are lifted.

Chrism Mass: ♦The Chrism Mass celebration also will have to be postponed, given the special circumstances; the date will be announced later.

Holy Thursday: ♦On Holy Thursday, the Holy Qurbana should be offered by the priests without the faithful present. The washing of feet is to be omitted. However, the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament can be held after the Holy Qurbana and both the Holy Qurbana and the adoration can be live streamed for the benefit of the faithful.

♦It is to be noted that there will be no common breaking of the bread in Parishes or Missions. Please encourage the faithful to observe this unique custom of ours in their homes in all solemnity as this is part of our tradition.

♦The traditional procession with the Blessed Sacrament to the place of repose at the end of the Qurbana also is to be omitted, and the Sacrament is to remain in the tabernacle.

Good Friday: ♦The Way of the Cross and the Reading of the Passion Narratives should be done in the Parishes and Mission Stations and it should be livestreamed so that the faithful can join in from their homes and pray.

♦The karozusa should include prayers of intercession for the sick, the dead, for those who feel lost or dismayed, due to corona virus.

Holy Saturday: ♦The Priests may celebrate the Holy Qurbana and help in the renewal of the baptismal pledge. (See the text for Holy Saturday)

Easter Vigil and Sunday: ♦The Priests may celebrate the Easter liturgy without the faithful being present.

Penance Service:

♦The Priests may, after informing their parishioners, conduct penance service for the faithful on any day of the preceding three days of Holy Thursday. The faithful may be granted general absolution but they should be instructed about the sincerity of contrition and the decision to go to personal confession on the nearest available opportunity for receiving the grace of forgiveness of sins.

Anointing of the Sick:

♦ The Priests are required to give the Sacrament of the Sick to the patients desirous of this Sacraments. In the case of corona virus, we are strongly advised to avoid any direct physical contact with patients. So, please contact with the Health Officials regarding patients in the hospitals and with law-enforcement Officers, regarding the patients at homes. Please use pastoral prudence to safeguard both patient and priest.

Kindly adhere to these instructions. Let us pray fervently that God' mercy be granted to us and to the whole world. May the Blessed Mother, St. Joseph, St. Thomas, our father in faith and the patron/patroness of our church intercede for us.

May God bless and protect us and our people,

+ *Jacob J. Angadiath*

Bishop Mar Jacob Angadiath

