



# The Archdiocese of San Francisco

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

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## MEMORANDUM

To: Priests of the Archdiocese

From: Most Rev. Salvatore J. Cordileone  
Archbishop of San Francisco

Date: March 16, 2020

Re: Update on Coronavirus Precautions

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As you are all aware by now, the Health Officers of six Bay Area counties (San Francisco, Marin, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Alameda and Contra Costa) earlier today issued a “shelter in place” order for the purpose of containing the spread of the coronavirus. The order remains in effect until April 7<sup>th</sup>, when an assessment will be made regarding continuing, modifying or dropping the order.

Please know that I have had extensive conversations over the past two days with priests, experts in the field (including two Stanford University professors, one in neurobiology and the other in medicine and microbiology), and lay faithful. I then, just this afternoon, had a conference call with the Deans of the Archdiocese along with the Vicars for Clergy, the Vicar General, and the Moderator of the Curia-Vicar for Administration in order to discern a path forward by which we can comply with what the counties are asking us to do, while at the same time continuing to provide for the spiritual care of our people. The instructions I give here are a result of this consultation.

### Masses

1. Pastors should celebrate the “Mass at which only one minister participates” (GIRM, nn. 252-259) in their parish churches every day (or designate another priest to celebrate it). This means that there will be only the priest and one altar server (preferably another priest or a seminarian who lives in the rectory if possible, so they are both of the same household). In this way, Mass will continue to be celebrated in our parish churches while respecting the social distancing that is

being urged on us. In rectories in which more than one priest resides, each priest may celebrate this Mass in the parish church once each day.

2. This Mass (or if more than one, the Mass designated by the pastor) should be livestreamed in those parishes that have this technology. Parishes that will be livestreaming Masses are asked to schedule these Masses at a set time and then inform the Communications Department of the time, as well as include a link through which people can access viewing the Mass, so that the Archdiocese may post this information on its social media platforms. Livestreaming will also allow the pastors to continue to communicate with their parishioners from the pulpit in real time.

3. Most parishes will have Mass intentions to fulfill, and this will also respect the intentions of the donors. Where there is no requested intention for the Mass, priests are asked to celebrate Masses for the intention of those suffering from the coronavirus, for the health care workers attending to them, and for researchers seeking a cure and vaccine for the virus.

4. Where the same vessels will be used by more than one priest, after they are thoroughly purified of any particles or residue of the Precious Blood, they are to be washed in hot water and dish soap.

5. We will post an announcement for the public, suggesting that those who follow Mass remotely make a spiritual Communion (and provide information for them on this). However, there will undoubtedly be urgent and earnest requests for sacramental Communion between now and April 7<sup>th</sup>. I leave it to your discretion to determine how to accommodate these requests in a way that is in accord with the Health Officers' order.

6. Churches should remain open during the day to the extent possible, so that our people may have the solace of prayer in a sacred space, especially before the Blessed Sacrament, during this distressing time.

### **Anointing of the Sick**

Preferred method: the priest dips his thumb into the oil stock *only once* to anoint both the forehead and the palms of the hands. Afterwards, he cleanses his thumb with a sanitizing moist towelette which is then disposed of in the proper manner (burned in a fire or buried in the ground).

Alternative: a cotton ball is dipped into the oil *only once* and used to anoint the forehead and palms of the hand. The used cotton balls must then be disposed of in the proper manner.

In both cases: if more than one person is being anointed in one visit, this procedure is to be observed *with each anointing*.

### **Confession**

If it is determined that posted hours for regularly hearing confessions in the parish church will *not* draw even a small crowd of people together (no more than ten at one time), then confessions

are to be heard in an open space, or, at least, in a spacious room such as a sacristy (not the traditional confessional, which is too confined of a space), while, if at all possible, observing the six feet rule if due regard for confidentiality can be respected. Otherwise, people are to be invited to call the parish office to schedule confession by appointment. In this latter case, it would be important to communicate this announcement widely and thoroughly.

### **Chrism Mass**

What we decided at the Presbyteral Council now won't work. Now, instead, the Chrism Mass will be held the morning of Holy Thursday (pending confirmation from the Cathedral of its availability), with only the members of the College of Consultors and the Deans or their delegates participating. Each Dean or his delegate will then bring to his parish the oils for each community in his deanery.

### **Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals**

Every attempt should be made to postpone weddings and funerals. For pastors who determine it inopportune to postpone baptism, the ritual should be carried out with no more than ten people in attendance and, to the extent possible, with the six feet rule being respected. The same applies for any weddings and funerals which cannot be postponed.

### **Holy Week**

Sadly, Palm Sunday falls within the timeframe covered by the order. It will, moreover, severely impact our celebration of the Triduum liturgies. I will communicate with you in due time with some guidance on how to carry out these ceremonies.

Thank you for your patience and understanding in this stressful time. As you know, what is critical at this time is to "flatten the curve," that is, extend the period of time in which people will get sick, so that our health care institutions are not overwhelmed. This would result in some people not getting the health care they need and, in all likelihood, some of them dying. You are critical to giving your people comfort, hope and tranquility at a time when it is easy to give into panic and self-preservation to the exclusion of love of neighbor. The common good calls us all to make these sacrifices at this time. Please know how immensely grateful I am to you.