



We proclaim a crucified Christ

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11 March 2021

CHRISM MASS and HOLY WEEK

Dear Bishops, Fathers and Deacons,

Lent began in a way that was less than ideal, but I am grateful that the recent lockdown came to an end, and that our people were able to enter this great season with the availability of the normal devotional practices. Although a quiet and gentle beginning, I hope it has truly been a holy Lent to all of us!

We need to consider how we are gathering with our people locally in the weeks and months ahead, especially with many reports from around our Archdiocese that some people are beginning to act as if everything was 'back to normal'. We don't want to run a risk that a parish or leader gets caught in a difficult situation in which any practices were considered unsafe or imprudent.

HOLY WEEK

With regard to larger events, please find some advice below to help with your planning:

- Coming out of the third Victorian lockdown, many people are fatigued by rules and restrictions, but we need to patiently guide our people to continue to practice safe and hygienic ways of gathering with one another.
- Please note that we also need to be prepared for sudden changes for at least the duration of the year – 2021.
- Keep your COVIDsafe plan on hand, and be clear about what it means for you and your Parish.
- You may wish to review the Government's 'COVIDsafe Summer' rules. The following links can assist you, and leaders within your Parish, toward planning for Holy Week:
 - [Public events – information for organisers](#)
 - [Public event self-assessment tool](#)
 - [Guidance for preparing a COVIDsafe event plan](#)

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has also provided some general principles for celebrations during Holy Week, which are provided in the attached letters for your information. Devotions such as Stations of the Cross, outdoor Masses and liturgies, Lenten and Easter celebrations, parish gatherings etc. are all subject to the relevant COVID regulations, but should be celebrated in a way that retains the beauty and sacredness of each opportunity for worship.

Questions have been received into my Office around particular liturgical areas. It should be noted that during the Evening Mass for the Lord's Supper, the Washing of the Feet (which is already optional) is to be omitted, and the Veneration of the Holy Cross during the Celebration of the Passion of Our Lord, should be made by a simple genuflection: the Cross is not to be revered with a kiss, or by touching. I would recommend that veneration also be offered during other devotions on Good Friday, such as the Stations of the Cross.

MASS of the HOLY OILS and CHRISM

Last year amongst so many deprivations, we were unable to celebrate the Chrism Mass - a time of great fraternal sharing and renewal in the sacramental life of the Church for all present. This year we will be able to move ahead with our planning, all going well!

To better enable a gathering of the whole of the local Church from across the Archdiocese, we will celebrate this key time in our liturgical calendar in the evening. The Chrism Mass and Chrism will be held on **Tuesday 30 March at 7.30pm** in the **Cathedral**, and will be followed by a light supper. It is important that each Parish be represented by its people, and I ask you to invite one (1) parishioner who may then be witness to the return of the sacramental Oils to your community. It may be worthwhile considering those involved in ministering to the sick and the sponsors of catechumens and candidates. Parishioners would be warmly welcomed to the supper. In coming years, we would be hoping to welcome more than one representative, but this year we are bound by numbers.

As in previous years, vesting will be in the Cathedral Room and Lecture Theatre of the Cardinal Knox Centre. Please ensure you bring your personal alb. Following the Mass, you are invited to enjoy a light supper at the Park Hyatt Hotel (directly opposite St Patrick's Cathedral). For planning and catering purposes it would assist the organising team greatly if you could please indicate if you, and a parishioner if applicable, will be attending through the following link: <https://www.trybooking.com/BJEGL>

The Cathedral grounds will be open until 10pm, and Oils may be collected from the fountain-side, outside the Vocations Office. Oils will also be available from the Cathedral Office (during office hours) in the weeks to follow.

In addition, as you are no doubt aware, due to COVID-19, the Plenary Council preparations have shifted significantly and the Plenary delegates for the Archdiocese of Melbourne despite being called to the role 12 months ago have not yet been Commissioned. With this significant

gathering of clergy and laity from across our Archdiocese at the Mass of the Oils, it was an opportune time to welcome and commission our Archdiocesan delegates. The commissioning will take place after Communion but prior to the final blessing and will include a number of clergy among the delegates.

I look forward to celebrating the Chrism Mass with all of you in a few weeks' time. Thank you for your patience and faithfulness in the midst of the Pandemic, and for your leadership.

With every grace and blessing, I remain,

Yours sincerely in Christ Jesus

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'P' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke, ending in a small flourish.

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli
Archbishop of Melbourne