



ARCHDIOCESE FOR THE MILITARY SERVICES, USA  
OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

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**by the Grace of God and the Favor of the Apostolic See**  
**Archbishop for the Military Services, USA publishes the following**

**DECREE**

Given the strictures mandated in order to contain the spread of the coronavirus and eager to ensure the spiritual welfare of the clergy and faithful entrusted to the pastoral care of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, while recognizing the important significance of the Liturgies of Holy Week and the Sacred Triduum, the following adaptations are to be observed in all chapels where a Catholic priest is assigned. Notes for the celebration of penance during this period follow.

- 1) The faithful should be informed of the times of the celebration so that they can prayerfully unite themselves in their homes. In this occasion, the means of live (not recorded) televisual or internet broadcasts are helpful.

**Holy Thursday**

- 2) The faculty to celebrate Mass on Holy Thursday in a suitable place, without the people, is granted in an exceptional manner to all priests." Nevertheless, priests should endeavor to celebrate the Mass of the Lord's Supper with the participation of at least two members of the faithful.
- 3) The washing of feet, which is already optional, is to be omitted.
- 4) At the end of the Mass of the Lord's Supper, unless a sufficient number of faithful are present, the procession with the Blessed Sacrament to the place of repose is to be omitted and the Blessed Sacrament is to be kept in the tabernacle.
- 5) Priests who are unable to celebrate Mass should instead pray Vespers of the day from the Liturgy of the Hours.
- 6) The faithful are invited to make acts of spiritual Communion and to cultivate their longing for the celebration of the Eucharist and reception of Holy Communion.

**Good Friday**

- 7) By its very nature, the Celebration of the Lord's Passion may not be celebrated in the absence of a priest.

8) For this year, the Adoration of the Holy Cross (*Roman Missal*, Friday of the Passion of the Lord, 17–21) is to take place in accord with n. 19 only—and not n. 18, i.e., the adoration of the cross by the assembly as a whole and not individually. The sign of reverence by the celebrant will be a genuflection or, if unable to genuflect, a profound bow.

9) In the Solemn Universal Prayer, the following is to be used:

**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 Almighty 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,  
look with compassion on our world, brought low by disease;  
protect us in the midst of the grave challenges that assail us,  
especially those deployed,  
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.

**Easter Vigil**

10) The Easter Vigil is to be celebrated only in chapels of military installations, where and in the measure that there is a real possibility of doing so, established by the priest responsible. It may never be celebrated privately (GIRM, 199). It is to begin at least thirty minutes after sunset.

11) At the Solemn Beginning of the Vigil or Lucernarium, if there is an insufficient presence of the faithful, the preparation and lighting of the fire can be omitted, the Paschal Candle is then lit, the procession is omitted and the Easter Proclamation (Exsultet) follows. The Liturgy of the Word follows as usual in the Liturgy for the Vigil.



12) If no one is to be baptized, the blessing of the water follows the homily as in nos. 54, 55, and 56 of the rubrics in the Roman Missal (p. 371). Mass continues with the General Intercessions.

13) Those who have absolutely no possibility of uniting themselves to the Paschal Vigil celebrated in a chapel or church should pray the Office of Readings for Easter Sunday.

### Sacrament of Penance

Keep in mind what has already been communicated: "Penance requires precautions to ensure that the sacramental seal is protected. If the penitent and confessor are alone in a closed room, they can maintain a safe distance from each other during the celebration of reconciliation. In more open spaces, however, where the penitent and confessor cannot maintain a safe distance, some creativity may be needed to permit the confessor to hear safely the confession of sins, e.g., with a curtain or fixed grille between them. In saying the prayer of absolution, the confessor is reminded that he need only extend his hands (or least his right hand) over the head of the penitent. No physical contact is required."

It is difficult to imagine a situation in which the faculty for General Absolution could be invoked, given that large gatherings of people are prohibited. The following counsels from the Apostolic Penitentiary are helpful for the faithful in this time of need.

"Where the individual faithful find themselves in the painful impossibility of receiving sacramental absolution, it should be remembered that perfect contrition, coming from the love of God, beloved above all things, expressed by a sincere request for forgiveness (that which the penitent is at present able to express) and accompanied by *votum confessionis*, that is, by the firm resolution to have recourse, as soon as possible, to sacramental confession, obtains forgiveness of sins, even mortal ones (cf. CCC, no. 1452)."

Perfect contrition requires:

- the love of God above all
- the sincere desire for forgiveness
- the ardent commitment to receive the sacrament of reconciliation when available

### Plenary Indulgence

A plenary indulgence is "granted to the faithful suffering from Coronavirus, who are subject to quarantine by order of the health authority in hospitals or in their own homes if, with a spirit detached from any sin, they unite spiritually through the media to the celebration of Holy Mass, the recitation of the Holy Rosary, to the pious practice of the Way of the Cross or other forms of devotion, or if at least they will recite the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and a pious invocation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, offering this trial in a

spirit of faith in God and charity towards their brothers and sisters, with the will to fulfil the usual conditions (sacramental confession, Eucharistic communion and prayer according to the Holy Father's intentions), as soon as possible."

- "Health care workers, family members and all those who, following the example of the Good Samaritan, exposing themselves to the risk of contagion, care for the sick of Coronavirus according to the words of the divine Redeemer: 'Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends' (Jn 15: 13), will obtain the same gift of the Plenary Indulgence under the same conditions."

An indulgence is "the expression of the Church's full confidence of being heard by the Father when - in view of Christ's merits and, by His gift, those of Our Lady and the saints - she asks Him to mitigate or cancel the painful aspect of punishment by fostering its medicinal aspect through other channels of grace" (St. John Paul II, General Audience, September 29, 1999).

A plenary indulgence removes all the temporal punishment due to sin (CCC, 1471).

Given this twenty-fifth day of March, Solemnity of the Annunciation, in the year of our Lord two thousand and twenty, in the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA.



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