

Triduum 2020 at SMO/SMP

The Introduction of the Roman Missal gives this direction as to a priest who might celebrate a Mass alone, “Mass should not be celebrated without a minister [deacon, lector, or acolyte] or at least one of the faithful [who might function as a reader, server, cantor or other music minister].” A priest who lives alone may be granted permission to offer Mass alone especially if advanced age or illness has brought him general weakness or disability. In the COVID-19 crisis this permission has been granted to all priests of our diocese.

The common direction for the celebration of the liturgies of the Triduum [Holy Thursday: The Mass of the Lord’s Supper; Good Friday: The Passion of the Lord; The Liturgy of the Word, Adoration of the Cross and Holy Communion; Holy Saturday: The Easter Vigil] calls for these celebrations to take place in the diocesan cathedral and parish churches. Concerning parish churches a further qualifier is noted, “... only in these churches in which they [the liturgies] can be performed with dignity, that is with a good attendance of the faithful, an appropriate numbers of ministers, and the means to sing at least some of the parts.”

These directives show clearly the great value of the presence and participation of you the faithful within the Mass and within these Triduum liturgies such that commonly these liturgies are not to take place, when either another minister other than the priest or any member of the faithful is not present for the liturgy. A number of parishes present in this COVID-19 protocol days livestream or recorded Masses for viewing. The viewing of these liturgy presentations, while not a participation in these liturgies, does serve as a worthy devotional. The spiritual life of those who prayerfully and devoutly view them is well served by their presentation. Those presenting them are to be commended for doing so. More professional presentations from the Vatican and other more professional production and broadcast church sites offer a more quality presentation than those of less proficient but local church sites. There is however a local community appreciation aspect which is a significant feature of these services provided by local sites.

National and state COVID-19 response advisory agencies have shared a heightened concern for persons to be together even while observing social distancing protocols. This calls into question the value of bringing local persons together for the local production of a recorded and/or livestream liturgy presentation which, while local, is but a duplicate of other and better production quality liturgy presentations. It is also questionable under these health protection protocols whether anyone not obligated should do what is only the obligation of a pastor in the offering of a Sunday and Holy Day Mass for his parish. His offering of a Mass alone in an unoccupied and locked church offers him no reasonable health risk to prevent him from doing so.

Should a priest not pray the Holy Thursday Mass, or the Good Friday services or the Holy Saturday Easter Vigil, special prayers within the Liturgy of the Hours, the daily prayer of a priest, known as the

Office are provided for him to pray in place of his participation in these liturgies. Given the heightened concern for the interaction among persons, that no reproduction of these services is currently possible at SMO/SMP, that quality online and broadcast presentations are readily available and that at SMO/SMP these liturgies would be prayed alone, I will be as my parishioners prayerfully and devotionally viewing the presentation of these services and praying for my parishes as I pray the special Triduum prayers of my daily Office. I will, as a pastor should, honor my obligation to you, my parishioners, as I alone offer for your intention Easter Sunday Mass. Strangely we will be one in our absence one from another. Most importantly we are one in Christ and one in our prayer one for the other.

Easter Blessings, The Lord is Risen!

Fr. John