

GUIDELINES IN VIEW OF PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY FOR COVID-19 FOR THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CACERES

In support to the effort to combat the transmission of the COVID 19, the Archdiocese of Caceres provides the following guidelines for all the faithful.

Inside the Church:

1. Suspend the practice of dipping of hands in the Holy Water Font or Stoup. Empty all fonts and inform the faithful that such practice is temporarily suspended. Sprinkling of Holy Water can be done before or after liturgical gatherings. Holy Water will be made available, upon request, for the faithful to take home.
2. Routinely disinfect high touch areas such as pews, benches, door knobs as well as microphone covers.
3. Observe best sanitation practices as advised by healthcare professionals, e.g., frequent cleaning of liturgical space and objects such as sacred statues and sacred vessels; careful handwashing; proper distancing.
4. Open windows of churches and chapels with air-conditioning units in order for air, heat and sunlight to circulate. In addition, air-conditioning units may be bio misted.
5. Alcohol or sanitizers should be made available at all entrances and accessible to the public.

To the Faithful:

1. Taking the basic steps of wellness as recommended by health authorities is not only sensible, but wise and considerate of others. In truth, it is an expression of genuine charity.
2. Observe cough etiquette (like covering one's mouth with sleeves or napkins which should be disposed of, properly.) Promote frequent hand washing and other healthcare practices.
3. Those physically unwell shall refrain from liturgical assemblies until cleared of illness. Vulnerable populations like the elderly and the immunocompromised may participate in the celebration of Holy Mass on TV and social media.
4. Reception of Holy Communion shall be by hand.
5. Communion ministers, both the ordained and the lay ministers, should wear face masks when they give communion as protection for themselves and for the communicants. They are expected to sanitize their hands before and after Holy Communion and to wash their hands according to the instructions of the DOH.
6. Holding hands when praying the Lord's Prayer and when giving the sign of peace during the Mass is discouraged.
7. For the time being, the traditional Filipino sign of reverence usually done by holding the hands of priests and the elderly (pagbisa o pagmano) can be substituted by a slight bow with a smile.
8. Confessions are to be done in the Confessionals with a protective cloth installed at the grill.
9. Since the Lenten season is the time for Kumpisalang Bayan, the Archbishop grants permission for General Absolution.

To the Clergy and religious:

1. Spend time in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament for the intention of the people and specially for the healing of the sick.
2. Consider calling for a Day of Prayer and Fasting in your respective parishes and communities, for our deliverance from this pandemic.
3. The anointing of the sick must be guided by precautionary measures proposed by the DOH, particularly the wearing of the mask and frequent handwashing.
4. Emphasize among the faithful to keep a high degree of hygiene protocol and to increase efforts to maintain the cleanliness of our churches and church facilities.
5. We ask all our parishes to sound together the church bells at 12:00 noon and 8:00 PM and pray the Oratio Imperata.
6. Our churches remain open so that those who need to pray and seek prayerful moments may find solace and strength in these trying times.

For Baptism and Wedding:

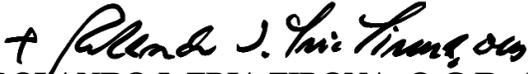
If possible, weddings and baptisms should be re-scheduled after the COVID-19 pandemic has ceased; otherwise, safety health measures must be observed, such as:

- a. The signing of the cross on the forehead during baptism must be limited to the cleric and the parents. In the anointing of chrism, cotton balls should be used once for each candidate for baptism.
- b. During weddings, communion of the couple will be received by the hand.
- c. Proper distancing, as recommended by Department of Health, should be observed.

For Fiesta Celebrations and other Acts of Worship:

The parish priest should discern together with the Pastoral Council the proper celebration of the fiesta and other acts of worship where a large number of people are expected. The precautionary measures enumerated herein and the directives of government authorities should be given primary consideration.

In Christ,


✠ ROLANDO J. TRIA TIRONA, O.C.D., D.D.
Archbishop of Caceres