

Orantes

The monthly Newsletter of the Office for Divine Worship of
the Diocese of Worcester

DECEMBER 2020

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Preparing for Christmas

At this writing, the Commonwealth is reporting 19,366 active COVID-19 cases. The IHME predicts that by Christmas the number of cases could rise by 24% and the number of deaths from 17 to 104 in that same timeframe.

That is why we are publishing a second issue of *Orantes* on how to prepare for a safe Christmas in our parishes. Bishop McManus has, therefore, approved revised guidelines for music at Mass and is granting permission for Christmas Eve Masses to begin an hour earlier under particular circumstances. He is also extending the dispensation from the Sunday Mass obligation until the First Sunday of Lent - February 21, 2021.

Finally, let us keep each other in prayer this Christmas that we might “merit to stand ready with pure hearts for the coming in glory”¹ of the Son of the Living God.

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¹ *Roman Missal*, Prayer after Communion, Christmas Eve Morning Mass

A Letter from Bishop McManus

10 November 2020

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Since the first days of the present pandemic, the Priests, Deacons and faithful of the Diocese of Worcester have struggled in an exemplary way to minister to the sick and protect the vulnerable, while remaining safe and close to the Lord. In circumstances we could never have imagined, we have sought to celebrate the Sacred Liturgy with integrity and fidelity.



As we enter, yet again, into an intense struggle with the COVID-19 virus I call upon you to continue these noble efforts. In these days of increased spread of the virus, I ask every priest to assure that the guidelines provided by the Office for Divine Worship be faithfully observed in each of our parishes, including the revised guidelines for singing at the Liturgy contained in this edition of *Orantes*.

As we prepare for the celebration of the Nativity of the Lord, the safe scheduling of Christmas Masses is on the mind of each one of our priests. In the interest of providing the opportunity for as many of our people as possible to participate in a Christmas Mass, I am granting permission for Mass to be celebrated as early as 3:00pm on Christmas Eve, provided that at least two Masses are also celebrated on Christmas morning. This permission is granted after consultation with my fellow Bishops and applies only to Christmas Eve of this year.

Finally, on March 16, 2020 I announced my decision to suspend the obligation to take part in the Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation due to the specific danger presented by this virus to older people and those with certain health conditions.

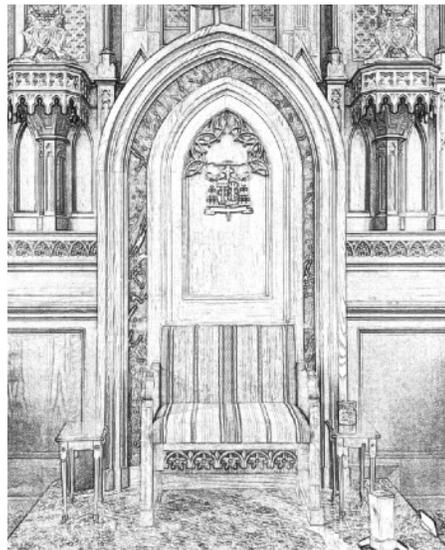
With this letter I continue that suspension until the First Sunday of Lent, February 21, 2021, at which time I will reconsider the question as circumstances may require it.

In last month's issue of *Orantes* you read the carefully considered letter of the Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Cardinal Sarah. As His Eminence so beautifully reminded us, "we cannot be without the banquet of the Eucharist, the table of the Lord to which we are invited as sons and daughters, brothers and sisters to receive the Risen Christ himself, present in body, blood, soul and divinity in that Bread of heaven which sustains us in the joys and labors of this earthly pilgrimage."

It is my prayer that through our continuing and fruitful celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the source and summit of our lives, the Lord will give us the graces we need to be his faithful and obedient servants in these challenging days.

Fraternally yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Robert J. McManus
Bishop of Worcester



Revised Guidelines for Singing

Singing, particularly loud and consonant-rich singing, carries an increased risk for the spread of COVID-19 through aerosolization of the virus.² Recent studies have also demonstrated that aerosolized particles can remain in the air for up to five hours in poorly ventilated areas.³

For this reason, the Diocese of Worcester has mandated that:⁴

- Choirs be suppressed for the immediate future;
- Congregational singing is to be limited to:
 - the Gospel Acclamation
 - the Sanctus
 - the Memorial Acclamation
 - the Great Amen
 - the Agnus Dei
 - the refrain to the Responsorial Psalm⁵
- Opening, Closing and Communion procession music should be **instrumental or sung only by a cantor**.
- All other parts of the Mass should be recited.
- Reusable Hymnals and Missalettes should not be distributed. Personal participation aids and Missals



² M. Alsved, et alia. (2020) "Exhaled respiratory particles during singing and talking, *Aerosol Science and Technology*." [10.1080/02786826.2020.1812502](https://doi.org/10.1080/02786826.2020.1812502).

³ Cf. "The Influence of room ventilation settings on aerosol clearance and distribution, in the *British Journal of Anaesthesia*." (23 October 2020). Nicolaas H. Sperna, et alia. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0007091220308539>

⁴ Cf. *Orantes*, 1 July 2020, page 7.

⁵ The Responsorial Psalm should be sung from a cantor's stand rather than from the Ambo if it is more distant from the faithful.

which are taken home by individuals may be distributed.

In the light of recent research and the continuing spread of the virus throughout the Diocese, Bishop McManus has approved five additional precautions which should be implemented by liturgical ministers in all parishes immediately:

1. Only one accompanied singer or solo instrumentalist is permitted at any one time. A different singer or instrumentalist may be used at different times during the Mass, especially at multi-lingual liturgical celebrations. Similarly, the organ may be used for accompaniment at one point during the Mass, while a guitar or keyboard may be used at another.

2. All instrumentalists and singers should ordinarily be masked and maintain a six foot social distance. If an instrumentalist finds it too difficult to wear a mask and can maintain more than a six foot distance from everyone else, they may remove the mask when playing.

3. Wind instruments (not including the Organ) are not to be used during the course of the pandemic.

4. Whenever feasible, the choir loft should be preferred to a space more proximate to the Congregation during the course of the pandemic.

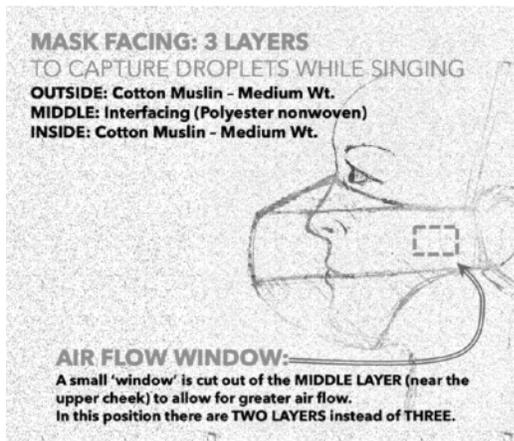
5. Because congregational participation in Processional Hymns is to be avoided in all circumstances, Congregations should be asked before each Mass begins **not** to join in any hymns to mitigate the possible mass aerosolization of the virus. The use of processional music other than popular carols is encouraged, especially the entrance and communion antiphon from either the *Roman Missal* or the *Roman*



Gradual. This is particularly important at Masses celebrated during the Christmas Season.

The “Singer’s Mask”

The “Singer’s mask,” developed specifically for singers, helps to contain aerosolized virus while allowing space around the mouth to sing comfortably. Made of cotton muslin, the interior structure keeps it away from the mouth, while form fitting to the nose and cheek. It is machine washable in cold water and available from the [Broadway Relief Project](#) for \$23.50.



Sample Christmas Announcement

Welcome to (NAME OF CHURCH) for this Christmas Mass. Thank you for keeping everyone safe by maintaining a social distance at all times and wearing a mask.

If you have not been with us recently, you will notice that the Communion procession is a bit different. **EXPLAIN LOCAL PROTOCOL FOR COMING TO COMMUNION.**

You will also notice that there will be no collection, but we encourage you to leave any Christmas donations in the boxes provided.

Finally, we ask for your understanding when it comes to singing, which has been severely limited in order to prevent transmission of the COVID-19 virus. Epidemiologists tell us that everyone singing a Christmas Carol together could contribute to the virus becoming airborne and spread. We invite you, therefore, not to sing along when you hear a familiar Christmas carol. We know that's very hard to do in this season of "Joy to the World," but hopefully we will be able to sing our hearts out next Christmas. For now, in the interest of keeping everyone safe, let us quietly join our hearts with the Christ Child in the Manger and pray with confidence that God will deliver us from the present pandemic and bring peace on earth and good will to all.



New Invocations in the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The October 2020 edition of the *Bishops' Committee on Divine Worship Newsletter* has announced that on June 20, 2020, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued a circular letter to the Presidents of the world's Conferences of Bishops (Prot. n. 296/20), communicating the decision of Pope Francis to insert three new invocations into the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, also known as the Litany of Loreto. The invocations "Mother of mercy," "Mother of hope," and "Solace of migrants" (or "Comfort of migrants") are inserted after "Mother of the Church," "Mother of divine grace," and "Refuge of sinners," respectively.

While different translations of the Litany of Loreto are available and may be used by the faithful, the following translation is drawn from the current edition of the *Manual of Indulgences* (USCCB Communications, 2006) and further adapted. The translation of the concluding prayer is taken from the *Roman Missal, Third Edition*.



Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary Litany of Loretto

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

God, the Father of heaven, *Have mercy on us.*
God the Son, Redeemer of the world,
God the Holy Spirit
Holy Trinity, one God,

Holy Mother of God,
Most honored of virgins,
Mother of Christ,
Glory of Israel,
Vessel of selfless devotion
Mystical Rose,
Tower of David,
Mother of the Church,
Mother of mercy,
Mother of divine grace,
Mother of hope,
Mother most pure,
Mother of chaste love,
Mother and virgin,
Sinless Mother,
Dearest of mothers,
Model of motherhood,
Mother of good counsel,
Mother of our Creator,
Mother of our Savior,
Virgin most wise,
Virgin rightly praised,
Virgin rightly renowned,
Virgin most powerful,
Virgin gentle in mercy,
Faithful Virgin,
Mirror of justice,
Throne of wisdom,
Cause of our joy,
Shrine of the Spirit,
Tower of ivory,
House of gold,
Ark of the covenant,
Gate of heaven,
Morning Star,
Health of the sick,
Refuge of sinners,
Solace of migrants,
Comfort of the troubled,

Pray for us.

Help of Christians,
Queen of angels,
Queen of patriarchs,
Queen of prophets,
Queen of apostles,
Queen of martyrs,
Queen of confessors,
Queen of virgins,
Queen of all saints,
Queen conceived without sin,
Queen assumed into heaven,
Queen of the Rosary,
Queen of families,
Queen of peace,

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,
Have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,
Have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,
Have mercy on us.

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God,
that we may be made worthy
of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray.

Grant, Lord God, that we, your servants,
may rejoice in unending health of mind and body,
and, through the glorious intercession
of Blessed Mary ever-Virgin,
may we be set free from present sorrow
and come to enjoy eternal happiness.
Through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*



Solemn Christmas Proclamation

The solemn announcement of the Nativity of the Lord may be appropriately proclaimed on December 24th at Evening Prayer or before the beginning of the Christmas Mass during the Night. A solemn spoken proclamation should be preferred over chanting, in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The text which is found in the *Roman Martyrology*, “begins with creation and relates the birth of the Lord to the major events and personages of sacred and secular history,”⁶ and is reproduced here for the benefit of our readers.



The Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ
The Twenty-fifth Day of December,

when ages beyond number had run their course
from the creation of the world,

when God in the beginning created heaven and earth,
and formed man in his own likeness;
when century upon century had passed
since the Almighty set his bow in the clouds
after the Great Flood, as a sign of covenant and peace;

⁶ USCCB, <https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year-and-calendar/christmas/christmas-proclamation>

in the twenty-first century since Abraham,
our father in faith,
came out of Ur of the Chaldees;

in the thirteenth century
since the People of Israel were led by Moses
in the Exodus from Egypt;

around the thousandth year
since David was anointed King;

in the sixty-fifth week of the prophecy of Daniel;

in the one hundred and ninety-fourth Olympiad;

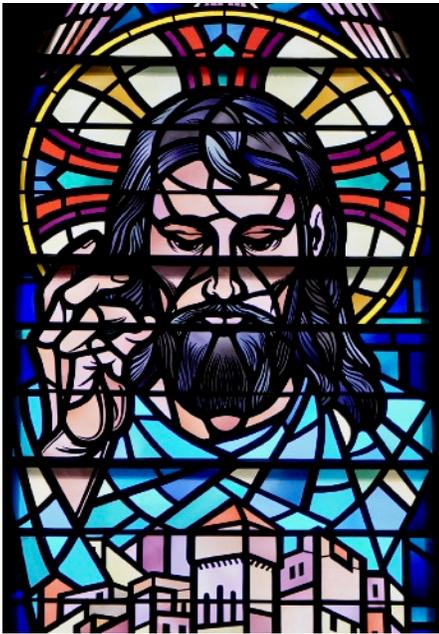
in the year seven hundred and fifty-two
since the foundation of the City of Rome;

in the forty-second year of the reign of Caesar
Octavian Augustus,
the whole world being at peace,
JESUS CHRIST,
eternal God and Son of the eternal Father,
desiring to consecrate the world
by his most loving presence,
was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
and when nine months had passed since his conception,
was born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Judah,
and was made man:

The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ
according to the flesh.



A Prayer in Time of Pandemic



O God,
whose Only Begotten Son
bore the weight of human suffering
for our salvation,
hear the prayers of your Church
for our sick brothers and sisters
and deliver us from this time of trial.

Open our ears and our hearts
to the voice of your Son:
Be not afraid, for I am with you always.

Bless all doctors and nurses,
researchers and public servants;
give us the wisdom to do what is right
and the faith to endure this hour,
that we might gather once again
to praise your name in the heart of your Church,
delivered from all distress
and confident in your mercy.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.