



Brothers and sisters in Christ,

As you will be aware, the situation regarding the Coronavirus pandemic is constantly changing, and this guidance will be updated accordingly as the need arises.

Message from His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos

“As we approach one of the most solemn and sacred times of the year we are blessed to be able to attend in person albeit with smaller numbers. I thank you for your support over the past months and would ask you to continue to do all you can to keep each other and yourselves safe as we journey through Holy Week and approach the joyous Feast of the Resurrection together. I pray that this week is a true journey for us all in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who healed the pains of the world through His glorious Resurrection.”

Guidance for Holy Week 2021

We look forward to sharing the Holy Pascha together, and are thankful that each parish will be able to provide a full Paschal service schedule this year. There will be a Parish Response Group (PRG) team for every service and all the spaces used will be fully sanitised before every service. Attendance will be in accordance with social distancing measures, and the specific capacity of each parish. We will continue to stream services online for those unable to attend.

As is the case with every church service, before attending your parish:

Members of congregations, volunteers and clergy must not attend parishes under any circumstances if they have any symptoms (even mild) of COVID-19, including:

- A high temperature
- A new continuous cough (non-chronic)
- A loss or change to sense of smell or taste
- Flu-like symptoms

If you have tested positive for Covid-19, you must not under any circumstance attend any service until the required quarantine period has passed according to national guidelines, and you have tested negative for the virus.

Registration and Reservation Process:

In order to be able to attend Holy Week services, congregation members need to complete a two-step process, the first of which may have already been done:

- 1) Registration – registering church membership via www.MyChurch.London if you have not already done so. Please ensure you are only registered with one parish as your primary choice, and indicate another parish as your secondary choice if you wish. Duplicate registrations to different parishes will be removed to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to attend services.

- 2) Reservation – reserving a place in the Holy Week reservation system when it becomes available, and as directed by parishes.

Online Reservation video

- An instructional video on the reservation process can be watched here: <https://youtu.be/PErwyECTjgc> This video provides more detailed information on this process and is also available via www.Youtube.com/CopticDioceseOfLondon

In addition to the general Diocesan COVID-19 guidance, there are certain considerations specific to the Holy Week services and these are outlined below:

General Unction of the Sick (Qandeel) – Friday 23 April 2021

To minimise the risk of cross infection between parishioners, the celebrant(s) will anoint each parishioner with Holy Oil three times, once on the forehead and the inside of each wrist, using a piece of cotton wool lightly dipped in the oil. The same piece of cotton wool may be used for all members of the same household. During this process parishioners and clergy must continue to wear their face masks.

Palm Sunday – Sunday 25 April 2021

Each parish will receive palms to adorn the church a number of days prior to the service taking place. Regrettably parishioners will not be able to bring their own palms into the church this year as palms cannot be adequately sanitised and therefore pose an increased risk of infection to attendees.

Liturgy of the Waters (Laqan) – Thursday 29 April 2021

The celebrant(s) will anoint each parishioner with blessed water once using a piece of cotton wool, and this same piece may be used for all members of the same household.

Parishioners are requested to bring their own bottle of water to this service and to keep it with them in order to receive the blessing of the water from their seat. Parishioners must not place the water anywhere other than their own seat to reduce movement in the church, and to avoid cross-contamination.

Each parish may provide a number of bottles to be distributed at a later date to those who are not able to attend in person.

Good Friday – Friday 30 April 2021

Roses will adorn the Crucifixion display as usual, however this year regrettably parishioners cannot bring their own roses. The number of people permitted in the Sanctuary at the time of the burial will be kept to a minimum.

Apocalypse Vigil – Saturday 1 May 2021

For the anointing process at the end of the Apocalypse vigil please see guidance for 'Unction of the Sick' earlier in this guidance.

Other considerations:

Readings

- Due to the increased number of readings taking place in services, readers are required to keep their face masks on whilst reading.
- Readers should not use the pulpit but hold their own book/electronic device in their hands whilst reading.

Processions

- Processions will take place at the appropriate times around the church, but will be limited to the celebrant(s) and a maximum of three deacons.

Service length

- Services will be limited to a maximum of three hours with the exception of Palm Sunday, Covenant Thursday, Good Friday, and the Apocalypse Vigil, which will also all be kept to a minimum.

Books

- To minimise risk of infection congregants may bring their own books as these will not be provided.

Seating

- The first chorus of the parish will be used during Holy Week services in order to allow the maximum capacity of each parish to be used.
- The Crucifixion display will be put in the first chorus.

We hope these guidelines have been helpful for you. If you have any questions, please feel free to approach stewards in your parishes for any clarifications.

Wishing you a blessed Holy Week leading to the glorious Feast of the Resurrection!