



CIRCULAR

Prtcl. No. 007 s. 2020

**TO : ALL THE CLERGY, RELIGIOUS AND THE PEOPLE OF GOD IN THE
ARCHDIOCESE OF PALO**

**RE : GUIDELINES FOR THE TOWN/BARRIO FIESTA CELEBRATIONS 2020 IN
THE ARCHDIOCESE OF PALO**

Dear Brothers,

PAX!

We are anticipating the fiesta celebrations in the parishes particularly during the entire month of May. In view of this, I am issuing a set of guidelines. After having communicated and coordinated with local civil authorities we have reached an agreement to push through with the fiesta celebrations but with substantial modifications pursuant to the existing Quarantine period. The following guidelines are issued in view of the current situation of the General Community Quarantine (GCQ) within the region.

1. We are still within the period of the Quarantine and therefore all the indications of the civil authorities must be followed faithfully. It is of paramount importance that parish and/or mission priests should communicate and coordinate with the local chief executives. In the event that favorable permission is not granted (that you celebrate barrio fiesta masses), I strongly advise that you abide by it.
2. Parish and Barrio fiestas can be celebrated with the following instructions:
 - a. Masses can be celebrated in the Church or in the chapels (this includes the novena masses). Different social media platforms may be utilized in the measure that they are available. The use of “trompas” would be a great help so that the faithful can also hear the mass while at home.
 - b. The faithful must be advised to refrain from attending the celebrations in keeping with the quarantine protocol. Their intentions (and offerings) should be accepted and read at the start of the mass.
 - c. Fiesta celebrations are occasions to strengthen family ties. The faithful, while in quarantine, should celebrate fiestas in their homes as “domestic church”. Faith celebrations are family celebrations. Thus, all the faithful should gather around the altar of their houses as “church” during the entire period of novena days until the feast day. Each family should pray the novena prayers with the intention of being one and in communion with the priests who celebrate the mass in their chapels.

- d. Those who should attend the masses are the sponsors and/or Hermanas/Hermanos Mayores only. As agreed during our meeting with Governor Petilla, the number of attendees must not exceed 5 (five) persons in small chapels and 10 (ten) persons in larger ones. All attending faithful must have their masks properly worn and always observing physical distancing. It is strongly advised that a local enforcer must be present during the entire celebrations to ensure the faithful fulfillment of the rules pursuant to the rules and regulations of the Quarantine.
- e. After every celebration of the Mass (novena/vigil/fiesta), the priest has to bless the entire place bringing with him the blessed sacrament. The faithful should be advised to put altars (the same as what was done during the Holy Week).
- f. Baptisms are strongly discouraged during this time. This may be done when the Quarantine period is lifted. However, when there is the urgency to baptize as stipulated by law (re: emergency baptism), the priest must see to it that the sacrament is celebrated as required (can. 867, 2 “si infans in periculo mortis versetur, sine ulla mora baptizetur).
- g. Food preparations must be done with sobriety. It would be a great service to the church that you instead share your resources with those who are in dire need.
- h. These indications shall remain in force until the GCQ is lifted in our region.

Pontifical Masses:

1. In order to avoid people from congregating because of my presence, as instructed by civil authorities, I shall abide by the rules of the Quarantine. The priest must secure favorable permission from the local chief executive. For documentation purposes, he has to write a formal letter to the same authority and must obtain an answer from the same.
2. The Archbishop shall abide by the indications of the civil authorities; in as much as permission is granted the celebration shall push through but always in compliance with the rules pertaining to the Quarantine.

In the meantime, I admonish the priests to continue exercising your duties as pastors particularly that of assuring the people of God’s unhampered compassion in the midst of this pandemic. The different social media platforms are very useful in reaching out to them: faith reflections and on-going catechesis are very much needed during these moments. There is the threat of uncertainty and even confusion among our faithful. Let us assure them that God walks with us and is slowly leading us towards the eventual cessation of this pandemic.

I am taking this opportunity to reach out to you and thank you for your generosity and determination in celebrating Holy Week. Let us always join together in lifting our prayers and desires to God believing in the words of our Lord: ”Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Matt. VII: 7).

Given this 19th day of April in the year of our Lord 2020, the feast of the Divine Mercy, at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Center and Chancery, Palo, Leyte.


 ✠ MOST REV. JOHN F. DU, D.D.
 Archbishop of Palo

