



Archdiocese of Palo

Archdiocesan Chancery and Socio-Pastoral Center
Salvacion, 6501 Palo, Leyte, Philippines

CIRCULAR

Prtcl. No. 010. s 2020

TO : PARISH PRIESTS AND PRIESTS MISSION IN-CHARGE
RE : GUIDELINES FOR THE CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS
DURING THIS TIME OF THE PANDEMIC

Dear Brother Priests,

PEACE!

Christmas liturgical celebrations are fast approaching. In principle, such celebrations will be observed by the faithful even at this time of the pandemic. Some and other significant changes will have to be made to ensure both the solemnity of the celebrations and our faithful's safety. God's love and compassion remain as the firm principle to guide our faithful. Let our celebrations be the answer through which doors are opened when they knock and seeking they may found the goodness of the Lord.

I am issuing this circular for your guidance. We must take its contents with utmost respect and obedience. These guidelines affirm our steadfast faith in these trying moments, but at the same time, our firm adherence to protocols set by competent authorities.

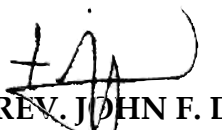
1. Our liturgical celebrations that involve the participation of a large number of people should always take into account the spiritual good of all and the physical well-being of those who take part. The protocol issued earlier on the manner of celebrating our liturgies is still in force. It is essential to review them and remind the faithful and especially our liturgical ministers to follow them.
2. No official church activity should be scheduled within the curfew hours. It is not wise to unnecessarily expose ourselves (and our parishioners) to harassment and complaints from civil authorities, including non-Catholics and anybody who may want to criticize our church's conduct. However, suppose the parish priest decides to conduct a liturgical celebration (with the faithful's participation within the curfew hours). In that case, he should secure first written permission from the local government. If consent is given, the priest concerned must inform the chancery and provide the same with the written permit document.
3. The Misa de Gallo / Simbang Gabi from December 16 - 24, which is celebrated in the early morning, should only start after the curfew has been lifted. For example, if the curfew ends at five o'clock in the morning (5 AM), Mass can only begin at 5:15 AM to give the parishioners time to be in church at the start of the Mass. The same goes true for the Evening Novena Masses in preparation for Christmas (December 15 - 23); these

masses should be scheduled much earlier to give time for those who participate to be at their homes once the curfew starts. Novena masses in preparation for Christmas may be celebrated at any time of the day from December 15 to 23.

4. On December 24 of this year, I permit the celebration of the Vigil Mass of Christmas, starting at three in the afternoon (3 PM). The last Mass of the day may use the Formulary of the Christmas Midnight Mass. On December 25, the Dawn Mass may be celebrated at six in the morning (6 AM), and the formulary for the Mass of the Day will be used for the remaining masses on Christmas Day.
5. Christmas masses may be celebrated in the chapels during the octave or Christmas season (or may even include the novena masses). On the occasion of this chapel Masses, the *Belen* (Christmas crib) or the *Dormido* (Infant Jesus lying on a manger) may be brought to the chapel for the blessing.
6. The traditional *Pax tecum* (the kissing of the image of the Infant Jesus brought to homes) is not allowed due to the pandemic. In its place, the parish may introduce creative ways to emphasize the spirit of Christmas. For example, we can encourage the parishioners to put up altars or the Christmas crib in their gates or porches and place their offerings (even mass intentions) and other gifts for the apostolate (or gift-giving to the poor) of the parish. A small procession of church ministers (carrying the *Dormido*) may go from one house to another either to bless their images or to say a prayer before the house or to simply offer a gift from the parish and to get whatever offering the household has prepared to be shared to the less fortunate (gifts for pick-up and delivery). In this and similar activities, coordination with the barangay and local authorities and compliance with the local health protocol should be strictly followed.
7. The parish and parish organizations' traditional Christmas parties are discouraged, but not the traditional gift-giving to the poor sections of our society. In the latter case, Christmas gifts may be given to pre-identified families, and gifts will be sent directly to their respective homes. Proper health protocol should be strictly observed.

With great anticipation for our forthcoming Clergy gathering and my paternal blessings for your pastoral endeavors, I remain.

Given this 13th day of November in the year of our Lord 2020 at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Center and Chancery, Palo, Leyte, Philippines.


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

