

Office of Worship 2020 Guidelines for Lent

“The annual observance of Lent is the special season for the ascent to the holy mountain of Easter. Through its twofold theme of repentance and preparation for Baptism, the season of Lent disposes both the catechumens and the faithful to celebrate the Pascal Mystery.” (Ceremonial of Bishops, 249).

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, which is “a powerful season, a turning point that can foster change and conversion in each of us. We all need to improve, to change for the better. Lent helps us and thus we leave behind old habits and the lazy addiction to the evil that deceives and ensnares us. During the season of Lent, the Church issues two important invitations: to have a greater awareness of the redemptive work of Christ; and to live out one’s Baptism with deeper commitment.” (Pope Francis, General Audience, March 5, 2014)

Moreover, the Lenten season is a special opportunity to grow spiritually through penitential practices, especially those of self-denial, almsgiving, and through works of kindness and compassion.

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are obligatory days of universal fast and abstinence. Fasting is obligatory for all who have completed their 18th year until the beginning of their 60th year. Fasting allows a person to eat one full meal. Two smaller meals may be taken, not to equal one full meal. Abstinence (from meat) is obligatory for all who have completed their 14th year of age. If possible, the fast on Good Friday is continued until the Easter Vigil (on Holy Saturday night) as the “paschal fast” to honor the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus and to prepare to share more fully and celebrate more readily his Resurrection. Fridays in Lent are obligatory days of abstinence (from meat) for all who have completed their 14th year. As always, anyone for whom fasting or abstinence would pose a health risk is excused.

Lent is also a time to emphasize the Sacrament of Penance. Parishes should be encouraged to offer the faithful various opportunities to celebrate this Sacrament, including individual Confession as well as Communal Penance Services. All priests are urged to ensure that every Catholic has the opportunity to celebrate this sacrament during Lent.

This Guideline contains resources for the season of Lent as well as some helpful information about the Chrism Mass, environment, and various Sacraments and Rites during this holy season. Our Liturgy, catechesis and devotions express this in many different ways. We hope these notes will be of help for all of you and a resource for the entire pastoral team, so please share!

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General Guidelines and Practices

Lent and Baptism

The key to understanding the meaning of Lent is simple: Baptism. Preparation for Baptism and for renewing baptismal commitment lies at the heart of the season. Since the Second Vatican Council, the Church has reemphasized the baptismal character of Lent, especially through the restoration of the Catechumenate and its Lenten rituals. Our challenge today is to renew our understanding of this important season of the Church year and to see how we can integrate our personal practices into this renewed perspective.

Why is Baptism so important in our Lenten understanding? Lent as a 40-day season developed in the fourth century from three merging sources. The first was the ancient paschal fast that began as a two-day observance before Easter but was gradually lengthened to 40 days. The second was the catechumenate as a process of preparation for Baptism, including an intense period of preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation to be celebrated at Easter. The third was the Order of Penitents, which was modeled on the catechumenate and sought a second conversion for those who had fallen back into serious sin after Baptism. As the catechumens (candidates for Baptism) entered their final period of preparation for Baptism, the penitents and the rest of the community accompanied them on their journey and prepared to renew their baptismal vows at Easter.

Lenten Fasting and Abstinence

The following regulations regarding fasting and abstinence are observed in the United States:

Catholics ages 14 and over are to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and all Fridays of Lent. Individuals between 18 and 59 are also obliged to fast – eat one full meal – on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. If possible, the fast on Good Friday is continued through Holy Saturday until the Easter Vigil. Eating two smaller meals is permitted if necessary to maintain strength but eating between meals should be avoided. These obligations, however, do not apply to those whose health or ability to work would be seriously affected.

Lenten Liturgical Guidelines

The two Eucharistic Prayers for Reconciliation are appropriate for use during Lent. Each one has its own Preface, but they can also be used with the Prefaces of Lent.

During Lent, the use of musical instruments is allowed only to support the singing. It would be advisable, however, to consider the purpose rather than the strict letter of this law, as certain musical pieces may indeed foster the spirit of the Lenten Season. Nevertheless, Laetare Sunday (4th Sunday of Lent), Solemnities, and Feasts are exceptions to this rule). The Alleluia is not said or sung, in any form, during Lent and it is particularly replaced with an appropriate Lenten Gospel Acclamation. The use of the Gloria is also suspended during Lent, with the exception of Solemnities that occur during the season.

The Disposal of Holy Oils

“The pastor is to obtain the sacred oils from his own bishop and keep them carefully in a fitting place.” (Canon 847) (This is done at the annual Chrism Mass).

“Each year when the bishop blesses the oils and consecrates the Chrism, the pastor should see that the old oils are properly disposed of by burning and that they are replaced by the newly blessed oils.” (Book of Blessings, 1127). If for any reason the holy oils cannot be burned, another acceptable practice is to bury them in sacred ground.

Lent Environment

During Lent the altar is not to be decorated with flowers. The Fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday), Solemnities (Saint Joseph – The Annunciation of the Lord) and Feasts are exceptions to this rule.

“In the Diocese of the United States, the practice of covering crosses and images throughout the church from this Sunday may be observed. Crosses remain covered until the end of the celebration of the Lord’s Passion on Good Friday, but images remain covered until the beginning of the Easter Vigil.” (Roman Missal, introduction to the Fifth Sunday of Lent)

The practice of emptying the holy water fonts during Lent or replacing the water with “sand” or other substances is not permitted by liturgical law. Blessing oneself with holy water upon entering a church is a sacramental and reminds one of his or her Baptism. The Congregation for Divine Worship has responded to many inquiries regarding this recent by promulgating the following clarification:

This Dicastery is able to respond that the removing of Holy Water from the fonts during the season of Lent is not permitted, in particular:

1. The liturgical legislation in force does not foresee this innovation, which in addition to being *praeter legem* (other than legal) is contrary to a balanced understanding of the season of Lent, which though truly being a season of penance, is also a season rich in the symbolism of water and baptism, constantly evoked in liturgical texts.
2. The encouragement of the Church that the faithful avail themselves frequently of her sacraments and sacramentals is to be understood to apply also to the season of Lent. The “fast” and “abstinence” which the faithful embrace in this season does not extend to abstaining from the sacraments or sacramentals of the Church.
3. The practice of the Church has been to empty the Holy Water fonts on the days of the Sacred Triduum in preparation of the blessing of the water at the Easter Vigil (after the Mass of the Lord’s Supper), and it corresponds to those days on which the Eucharist is not celebrated (i.e., Good Friday and Holy Saturday).

Celebration of Sacraments and Rites during Lent

Sacraments of Christian Initiation

Since the season of Lent points towards the celebration of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation during the Easter Vigil, it seems to be more fitting to celebrate them on Easter and during the Easter Season. However, one cannot deny these sacraments to the faithful if they are properly disposed.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

As many children, and adults in RCIA, are participating in the Sacrament of Penance for the first time, it is important to remember that a person's reception of the Sacrament of Penance is not a matter of parish record. In order to safeguard the seal of the sacrament, any sort of public acknowledgment should be avoided, including announcing their names, printing names in the parish bulletins, including them in the worship aid, etc. Certificates should never be issued for anyone receiving this Sacrament.

When planning communal Reconciliation services for the parish, please be reminded that the **Rite for Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution** should be used, and that the option of general confession and absolution is not permitted in this diocese.

A reminder that the Sacrament of Penance and the Anointing of the Sick can never be denied to the faithful who legitimately seek it. Those Sacraments can be celebrated on any day, including Good Friday and Holy Saturday.

Funerals during the season of Lent and the Easter Triduum

The Lenten season should be reflected in the choice of music and scripture. Also, it may also reflect a change in the color of vesture and employ the option to use purple. (see Order of Christian Funerals, 39)

On Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday, a funeral Mass may not be celebrated. On these days the body of the deceased may be brought into the church for a Funeral Liturgy outside Mass, using the Order of Christians Funerals, part I–chapter 4. A Mass for the deceased should be offered as soon as possible as is convenient after Easter Sunday (Order of Christian Funerals, 107-203).

Marriages during the Season of Lent and the Triduum

Marriages during the season of Lent may not be the best choice. However, one cannot deny the Sacraments to the faithful if they are properly disposed. If a marriage does take place during the Lenten season, there should be a marked moderation in the festivity, and the parish environment should not be altered from that of Lent. The celebration of marriage (and the convalidation of marriage) is not permitted during the Easter Triduum.

Communion for the Sick and Viaticum

Communion may be brought to the sick on all days except Holy Saturday. That day, communion may be given only as Viaticum. Communion services outside of the liturgy are not held on Holy Thursday, Good Friday or Holy Saturday. According to the Church's ancient tradition, the sacraments are not celebrated on Good Friday or Holy Saturday.

Particular Days of Lent

Ash Wednesday

26 February 2020

“On the Wednesday before the First Sunday of Lent the faithful, by receiving the ashes, enter upon the season appointed for spiritual purification. This sign of penance, biblical in origin (See 2 Sam 13:19; Esther 4:1; Job 42:6; 1 Mac 3:47, 4:39; Lam 2:10) and preserved among the customs of the Church until our own day, expresses the human condition as affected by sin. In this sign we outwardly profess our guilt before God and thereby, prompted by the hope that the Lord is kind and compassionate, patient and abounding in mercy, express our desire for inward conversion. This sign is also the beginning of the journey of conversion that will reach its goal in the celebration of the reconciliation during the days leading to Easter.” (Ceremonial of Bishops, 253)

- The Penitential Act is omitted—the Distribution of Ashes takes its place later in the liturgy.
- The Ashes should be blessed and distributed after the homily.
- The Universal Prayer is said; the Creed is omitted.
- The Mass is proper. Preface III or IV of Lent to be used.
- In case of pastoral need, the blessing and distribution of the Ashes can also take place during a celebration of the Word of God (Liturgy of the Word).

First Sunday of Lent

1 March 2020

The Sundays in Lent rank as solemnities, although the Gloria is not sung or said. The Third Edition of the Roman Missal provides proper Prefaces for each of the Sundays in Lent, and a Prayer over the People before the final blessing is provided as an option.

On the First Sunday of Lent, especially at the principal Mass, some distinctive elements, such as a solemn procession to the Church, accompanied by the Litany of Saints, may be done. (Ceremonial of Bishops no. 261). If this is done, the Celebrant, upon reaching the altar, removes the Cope (if worn), puts on the chasuble, reverences (and incenses) the altar, and goes to the Chair. The Introductory Rites of the Mass (Greeting, Penitential Act) are omitted, and, as circumstances suggest, also the Kyrie. The Celebrant invites the Assembly to pray and says the Opening Collect and then the Mass continues in the usual way.

The **Rite of Election** for those celebrating the Easter Sacraments will be held this weekend. Bishop Barber will celebrate the bilingual Rite of Election at the Cathedral of Christ the Light: Saturday, February 29th at 2 p.m. and Sunday, March 1st at 4 p.m. and 7 p.m.

The coordination of the Rite of Election is done by the Department of Faith Formation and Evangelization. Please contact Ms. Lizette Suarez, Lsuarez@oakdiocese.org) if you have any questions.

Anniversary of the Election of Pope Francis

13 March 2020

On this day, with permission of the Diocesan Bishop, the Mass for the Pope, n. 2: “Especially on the Anniversary of the Election” might be celebrated. In the Diocese of Oakland, Bishop Barber has granted permission to all priests to celebrate this Mass. The proper prayers may be used along with the readings of the day.

Third Sunday of Lent

15 March 2020

Proper Mass of the Day (Third Sunday of Lent) or from the Ritual Masses: “The Scrutinies.”

On this Sunday is celebrated the first Scrutiny in preparation of the Baptism of the Elect who are to be admitted to the Sacraments of Christian Initiation at the Easter Vigil. The first presentation of the elect is that of the Creed, made during the week following the first scrutiny. (RCIA, 157-163)

Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

19 March 2020

Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church, of workers, intercessor for a happy death.

Proper Mass of the Day (including proper Preface: “The mission of Saint Joseph”)

Gloria and Credo

Gospel acclamation as during the Lent season.

It is the custom in some places to bless bread, pastries and other food and to give a large portion of it to the poor. For the Order of Blessing of St. Joseph’s table (Book of Blessings, nos. 1679-1700). See also Catholic Household Book of Blessings and prayers (from the USCCB- Committee on the Liturgy, nos. 104-141).

The Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos* of Pope Saint John Paul II is a beautiful resource for meditation and preaching.

Fourth Sunday of Lent

22 March 2020

“In this Mass, the color violet or rose is used. Instrumental music is permitted, and the altar may be decorated with flowers.” (Roman Missal, introduction to the Fourth Sunday of Lent)

On this day is celebrated the second scrutiny in preparation for the Baptism of the catechumens who are to be admitted to the Sacraments of Christian Initiation at the Easter Vigil.

Proper Mass of the day, or from the Ritual Masses: “The Scrutinies.” (see Third Sunday for more info)

Annunciation of the Lord

25 March 2020

Proper Mass of the Day (including proper Preface: “The mystery of the Incarnation”)

Gloria and Credo

Gospel acclamation – as during the Lent Season

Fifth Sunday of Lent

29 March 2020

“In the Diocese of the United States, the practice of covering crosses and images throughout the church from this Sunday may be observed. Crosses remain covered until the end of the celebration of the Lord’s Passion on Good Friday, but images remain covered until the beginning of the Easter Vigil.” (Roman Missal, introduction to the Fifth Sunday of Lent)

On this day is celebrated the third scrutiny in preparation for the Baptism of the catechumens who are to be admitted to the Sacraments of Christian Initiation at the Easter Vigil.

Proper Mass of the day, or from the Ritual Masses: “The Scrutinies.”

Chrism Mass

2 April 2020

“This Mass, which the Bishop concelebrates with his presbyterate, should be, as it were, a manifestation of the Priest’s communion with their Bishop.”

“The Blessing of the Oil of the Sick and the Oil of Catechumens and the consecration of the Sacred Chrism are carried out by the Bishop on this day.” All parishes send representatives to this Mass to bring back the Holy Oils for use in their parish throughout the year.

Also, the Elect and candidates of the Diocese are especially invited to celebrate the Chrism Mass with us, and there will be a special RCIA Dismissal for them after the Liturgy of the Word.

Bishop Barber will celebrate the Chrism Mass at the Cathedral of Christ the Light at 6:30 p.m. The priests of the Diocese gather earlier that day for a day of recollection, prayer and fellowship, and then, will concelebrate the Chrism Mass and renew their priestly promises.

Palm Sunday of Passion of the Lord

5 April 2020

“On Passion Sunday the Church enters upon the mystery of its crucified, buried, and risen Lord, who, by his entrance into Jerusalem, gave a glimpse of his own majesty. Christians carry branches as a sign of the royal triumph that Christ won by his acceptance of the cross. Since Saint Paul says: “Provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified in him” (Rom 8:17), the link between these two aspects of the paschal mystery should stand out clearly in the liturgical celebration and catechesis of Palm Sunday.” (Ceremonial of Bishops, 263)

Three forms are offered for the beginning of Mass today: Procession, Solemn Entrance, and simple Entrance. Masses beginning with Procession or Solemn Entrance omit the Penitential Act.

The Passion proclaimed on this day is essential to the liturgy and cannot be omitted.

The narrative of the Lord’s Passion is read without candles and without incense, with no greeting (“The Lord be with you” is not said) or signing of the book. It is read by a Deacon or, if there is no Deacon, by a Priest. It might also be proclaimed using several ministers. Lay persons are allowed to do any of the parts, but the part of our Lord should be reserved to a priest.

Deacons, but not others, ask for the blessing of the Priest before reading the Passion, as at other times before the Gospel.

The Proclamation of the Passion of the Lord during Mass is not to be changed for a play or other type of theatrical representation.