
“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)

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

Lent is also a time to emphasize the Sacrament of Penance. Parishes are 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 helpful information about the season of Lent, 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

Lenten Fasting and Abstinence

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.

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.

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), and the solemnities of Saint Joseph and the Annunciation of the Lord 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)

Celebration of Sacraments and Rites during Lent

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. The option of general confession and general 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, except for Confession, the sacraments are not celebrated on Good Friday or Holy Saturday.

Particular Days of Lent

Ash Wednesday

2 March 2022

“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 Ashes are blessed and distributed after the homily (see below).
- The Creed is omitted; the Universal Prayer is said.
- The Mass is proper. Preface III or IV of Lent is appropriate for use today.
- The Book of Blessings provides instructions for distribution of ashes outside of Mass.

Pandemic Adaptations (Two Options)

1. In the Diocese of Oakland, you may distribute ashes in the normal way, with the minister and recipient both wearing a mask. The formula found in the Roman Missal: “Repent, and believe in the Gospel” or “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return” may be said to each person.
2. A priest or deacon may use (moistened) cotton or a Q-tip to administer ashes, but the Bishop, in no way requires or recommends it. Cotton should be burnt after use.

The wearing of ashes is not an obligation of the faithful, so anyone who is uncomfortable should not come forward.

First Sunday of Lent

6 March 2022

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.

Second Sunday of Lent

13 March 2022

A special intention for Pope Francis may be included in the Universal Prayer on the anniversary of his election as pope (13 March 2013).

St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary Saturday, 19 March 2022

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, pastry 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 Third Sunday of Lent is observed at the Saturday evening Mass.

Third Sunday of Lent

20 March 2022

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

The first scrutiny is celebrated 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)

For those attending the Rite of Election on Sunday, the First Scrutiny will be included in the Rite.

Annunciation of the Lord

Friday, 25 March 2022

Proper Mass of the Day (including proper Preface: “The mystery of the Incarnation”)
Gloria and Credo
Gospel acclamation – as during the Lent Season

Fourth Sunday of Lent

27 March 2022

“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)

The second scrutiny is celebrated 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 information)

“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 third scrutiny is celebrated 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.”

“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)

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.