



FROM THE OFFICE OF WORSHIP...

NOTES FOR SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2016

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Honoring Veterans on November 11

Q.: What are some ways we could honor our veterans on November 11?

A.: While there is no “official” blessing or prayer that is used to recognize and thank those who have served in the armed forces, there are a few options for this day as well as one Providential coincidence:

- ✘ The simplest method is to include a petition in the Prayer of the Faithful at Mass for our veterans;
- ✘ also at Mass, Solemn Blessings #12 and 13 speak of the blessings of peace, and safety from adversity;
- ✘ Chapters 70-71 in the *Book of Blessings* could be adapted to give thanks for their service;
- ✘ Thanks to Divine coincidence, November 11 is the Memorial of Saint Martin of Tours, patron of soldiers. Perhaps a prayer card or medal of the saint could be blessed and given to veterans that day.

Liturgical Options for Thanksgiving

Q.: What are the liturgical options available for Thanksgiving Day?

A.: There are two options available to us. November 24 on the liturgical calendar is the Memorial of Saint Andrew Dung-Lac and Companions. With the persecution of Christians still alive in the world today, we should not overlook the sacrifice of the Vietnamese martyrs.

For Thanksgiving, the *Roman Missal* also provides proper prayers for Masses on Thanksgiving Day, complete with its own proper Preface. These are found in the Proper of Saints at the end of November. The readings may be from the day or could be taken from the section “In Thanksgiving to God,” nos. 943-947 of the *Lectionary for Mass* (volume IV). These proper prayers and readings may be used at the discretion of the pastor or priest celebrant. If this option is exercised, it would be appropriate to still acknowledge the martyrs of the day either in the introduction to the Mass or perhaps in the intercessions (example—using the Collect for Saint Andrew Dung-Lac as the concluding prayer of the intercessions).

In addition, the *Book of Blessings* provides a blessing of food for Thanksgiving Day, which may be used in or out of Mass. See chapter 58, nos. 1755-1780, for the full order of service.

Of course, every Mass is the greatest celebration of thanksgiving we can hope to offer (the word “Eucharist” coming from the Greek word *eucharistia*, meaning “thanksgiving”).

Reminder for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception in 2016

As a reminder—in 2016, December 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, is a holy day of obligation. It is our national feast day, with the United States under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary, celebrating her Immaculate Conception.

Scheduling Masses—Since the Solemnity takes precedent over Memorials and Feasts, Masses the evening of Wednesday, December 7 (Memorial of Saint Ambrose) would be anticipatory Masses for the Immaculate Conception. There are not proper vigil Mass prayers and readings for this Solemnity.

Ritual and Funeral Masses—According to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM), no. 372, Ritual Masses are not permitted on Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter, as well as on Solemnities, days within the Easter Octave, All Souls' Day, Ash Wednesday, and Holy Week. Therefore, Ritual Masses, including the celebration of Matrimony within Mass, are not permitted, although a wedding outside of Mass would be allowed.

GIRM no. 380 prohibits Funeral Masses on the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter, Thursday of Holy Week and the Paschal Triduum, and Solemnities that are Holydays of Obligation. Since this is a holy day of obligation for us this year, Funeral Masses are not permitted. If one were to need to celebrate a funeral liturgy on this day, the “Funeral Liturgy Outside of Mass” found in the *Order of Christian Funerals*, nos. 177-203 would be used.

Besides, what is heaven if not the mystery of love that eternally unites us to God, to contemplate him forever? The Church has always professed this by expressing her belief in the communion of saints. We are never alone in living the faith; we do so in the company of all the saints and of our loved ones who practiced the faith with joyful simplicity and bore witness to it by their lives. There is a bond, unseen but not for that reason any less real, which makes us, by baptism, “one body” moved by “one Spirit” (cf. Eph 4:4).

—Pope Francis, Meditation in the Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli in Assisi, 4 August 2016

Advent Wreaths

Q.: What is the most appropriate place for the Advent wreath in the church?

A.: Advent wreaths, in terms of usage in churches, are a relatively recent development. This Germanic custom has become the customary reminder that the Advent season is upon us and stands as a visual reminder of our anticipation of the celebration of the Nativity at Christmas.

There is actually some leeway as to the placement and usage of the Advent wreath. Traditionally, the wreath consists of three violet candles and one rose candle that correspond to the Sundays of Advent. However, one may use four candles of the same color. A new candle is then lit for every Sunday of Advent.

While there is no hard and fast rule for the placement of the wreath, there are some basic guidelines for its usage:

- ✘ It should be of a suitable size for the space – do not use a small tabletop wreath for your church, but also do not use an oppressively large wreath that overwhelms everything around it, either.
- ✘ It may be placed in the sanctuary, at the entrance of the church, in another visible location or devotional chapel in the church proper, or perhaps even suspended from the ceiling.
- ✘ Wherever it is placed, it should never obscure or interfere with the action of the Mass or other liturgies that are celebrated in the church. It also should not replace the altar candles or the Easter candle.

The blessing of the Advent wreath may take place on the first Sunday of Advent in the context of Mass, Liturgy of the Hours, or a Liturgy of the Word. Ideally, the wreath should only be blessed at one liturgy and not repeatedly blessed over the course of a weekend. For all subsequent uses of the Advent wreath, the appropriate candles may be lit either before Mass or other liturgy, or just before the Collect of Mass.

For more information on blessing, placement, and usage of the Advent wreath, please see Chapter 47 of the *Book of Blessings*, nos. 1509-1540.

Book of Blessings and the Christmas Season

While the official liturgical season that is Christmas is relatively short, there are several liturgical blessings particular to the season that are good to recognize and celebrate. The *Book of Blessings* (BB) and *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers* (HB) provide the content.

Blessing of Nativity: BB, chapter 48; HB, pg. 78—Probably the most obvious blessing is the blessing the nativity scene or manger, either at the parish or at home. Chapter 48 of BB provides the Order for blessing the nativity either in or out of Mass. It would seem to make sense that the nativity be blessed only once over the course of the Christmas liturgies, ideally at the first Mass of Christmas Eve or prior to it. However, it could also be revered with incense at any subsequent Christmas liturgies, perhaps during the incensing of the altar and cross at the Entrance. The shorter form found in BB is the same as what is found in HB for blessing the home nativity.

Blessing of a Christmas Tree: BB, chapter 49; HB, pg. 78—Both BB and HB also provide a blessing for the Christmas tree (BB, chapter 49; HB, pg. 78). Trees set up in the church are not blessed in the context of Mass. At home or at church, the blessing may be celebrated during Liturgy of the Hours or a liturgy of the Word.

Blessing of Family: BB, chapter 1—The Feast of the Holy Family is an appropriate time to recognize the sacredness of the family and ask for God’s special blessing upon them. BB chapter 1 (nos. 62-67) would be most useful for this.

Blessing of Homes During the Christmas Season: BB, chapter 50; HB, pg. 88—The Christmas season, and especially Epiphany, is a traditional time when homes are blessed. One could also easily incorporate the Epiphany custom of marking the doors of the home with the year and the initials of the Magi (which is also an abbreviation for “May Christ bless this house” in Latin): 20+C+B+M+14.

Texts for these blessings are also available online from the USCCB at <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/sacraments-and-sacramentals/sacramentals-blessings/objects/index.cfm>

Upcoming Holy Days of Obligation and Movable Feasts During the Christmas Season

December 25—Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)—It is always a holy day of obligation!

December 30—The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph—When there is no Sunday within the Octave of Christmas, this feast is celebrated on December 30. **Please note**—since this year it is a “weekday Feast,” only one reading (along with the Responsorial Psalm) is used before the Gospel. Please remind your readers which reading will be used. As with any proper Feast, the *Gloria* is to be sung at this Mass.

January 1—Octave Day of the Nativity of the Lord: Mary, the Holy Mother of God—Since it is a Sunday, it is a holy day of obligation in 2017. The Diocese of Evansville is under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title “Mother of God.”

January 8—The Epiphany of the Lord—While the traditional date for this Feast is January 6, in the United States it is moved to the Sunday between January 2 and January 8. **Please note**—in the *Roman Missal*, there are proper prayers to be used for Vigil Masses of Epiphany celebrated the evening of Saturday, January 7. The readings, however, remain the same for both days.

January 9—The Baptism of the Lord—This Feast, typically celebrated the Sunday after Epiphany, moves to Monday when the Sunday lands on January 7 or 8. This is the conclusion of the Christmas season. **Please note**—like the Holy Family above, “weekday Feast” rules apply for this day.

Lectionary for Mass Supplement Approved

The publication of the current four-volume *Lectionary for Mass* between 1998 and 2002 included all saints and blessed at that time. Nonetheless, new liturgical celebrations continued to be added over the years, both in the General Roman Calendar and in the Proper Calendar for the Dioceses of the United States of America. Many of the Mass formularies were included in the *Roman Missal, Third Edition*, and a *Liturgy of the Hours Supplement* was approved by the USCCB in 2014 and awaits confirmation from the Holy See.

With the passage of time, and another Lectionary update from the Congregation in 2015, the USCCB Secretariat of Divine Worship began to compile all the updated citations and other corrections into a supplemental volume of the *Lectionary for Mass*. This collection of readings was eventually augmented and developed into the *Lectionary for Mass Supplement*. The Committee on Divine Worship formally approved the supplement's publication at its June 2015 meeting in St. Louis, Missouri. This supplement will bring the Lectionary up to date until a revised publication of the *Lectionary for Mass* sometime in the future.

The Secretariat of Divine Worship is presently working with liturgical publishers with the hope of producing editions of the *Lectionary for Mass Supplement* by early next year (2017). The supplement may be put into use as soon as it is published. Citations from the supplement will be appropriately incorporated into participation aids and other liturgical ordos and manuscripts over the course of the next year.

Twenty-six new citations are being added to the Lectionary, of which eighteen were prescribed at one time or another by the Holy See. The remainder reflect updates to the U.S. Proper Calendar. These will be addressed in upcoming editions of the newsletter. (*Information from the September 2016 BCDW Newsletter was used for this article.*)

Readings for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

Just a reminder—per the *Lectionary for Mass*, the readings for the proper Vigil Mass of the Nativity (#13 in the *Lectionary*) may be used for the Masses of Christmas Day, and, in fact, the readings from any of the Christmas Masses (#s 14-16) may be used at the other Christmas Masses depending on pastoral need. The preference would still seem to be to use the assigned readings at their assigned Masses since there is some continuity in their order (especially Mass at Midnight and Mass at Dawn), but they may be rearranged if it is pastorally helpful.

Christmas 2017

“Christmas Creep” for 2017—in 2017, December 25 will land on a Monday. This leads to a very busy few days in the parish for those responsible for the various ministries and liturgical preparation. Even though we are thirteen months away, here are a few things to keep in mind in preparing:

- ✘ With Sunday morning (and Saturday evening) Masses for the Fourth Sunday of Advent leading into the slate of Masses for Christmas that evening, it may be necessary to “pull back” a bit for the Advent Sunday in order to not overburden the various ministries those days.
- ✘ On Sunday, December 24, Masses after 4 PM would be for the Vigil of the Nativity rather than for Sunday.
- ✘ December 25 is always a holy day of obligation. Please let your people know in the weeks leading up to Christmas 2017 of that fact, and of the need for them to participate in Masses both for the Sunday and for Christmas. Participating in Mass the evening of December 24 only fulfills one obligation—no “double dipping” for Christmas!
- ✘ Mass intentions—As is the case with any holy day of obligation, one of the Masses for Christmas must be said *pro populo* (“for the people”).

Much of this can also be said for the following New Year’s Day Masses for Mary, Mother of God. However, in 2018 January 1 is a Monday, so it would not be a holy day of obligation.

New Instruction on Cremation

Q.: What has changed with the Holy See's recent instruction regarding cremation?

A.: In all honesty, not much. It seems, in the opinion of this writer, that this story was grabbed and sensationalized by the media without knowing or presenting the background.

On October 25 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith released an Instruction entitled *Ad resurgendum cum Christo* ("To rise with Christ"), regarding the burial of the deceased and the conservation of the ashes in the case of cremation. At the press conference that accompanied the release, Cardinal Gerhard Müller, prefect of the Congregation, noted that there has been a continual increase worldwide in the number of requests for cremation, and it is likely that in the near future cremation will be considered a commonplace practice. This development has been accompanied by another phenomenon: the conservation of ashes in homes, as commemorative items, or their dispersal in nature. Therefore, the Congregation saw a need "to reiterate the doctrinal and pastoral reasons for the preference for the burial of the dead, and secondly, to issue rules for guidance on the conservation of ashes in the case of cremation."

There are two points to take away from the Cardinal's comments. First, this is a worldwide issue, so it is not directed only at the U.S.A. or another country—it is a universal concern for a universal Church. Second is the need to "reiterate" the current practice of the Church. This is not a statement of something new, but rather a reminder of what the Church holds up with some clarification on how that can and should be done.

The Church has actually allowed for cremation since the Instruction *Piam et constantem* in 1963. As long as cremation was not chosen due to a denial of the resurrection of the body or other anti-Christian motives, the Church saw it wise to relax the restrictions while still upholding the preference for burial of the body. This was especially directed towards those areas of the world where cremation was being requested due to economic hardship or just out of necessity.

In 1997, an indult was granted to the dioceses of the United States to allow for the presence of cremated remains at the funeral liturgies, and a special appendix to the funeral rite was prepared that addressed how the remains were to be treated. In short, cremated remains were to be respected in the same way as the body, from the use of a worthy vessel to the need to bury or entomb the ashes. "The practice of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air, or on the ground, or keeping cremated remains in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased are not the reverent disposition that the Church requires" (*Order of Christian Funerals*, no. 412).

This new instruction, therefore, does not change the practice of the Church in the United States for the past nineteen years. Rather, it only reaffirms and restates what we believe and what we do:

- ✘ "By burying the bodies of the faithful, the Church confirms her faith in the resurrection of the body, and intends to show the great dignity of the human body as an integral part of the human person whose body forms part of their identity. She cannot, therefore, condone attitudes or permit rites that involve erroneous ideas about death..." (no. 3)
- ✘ "Furthermore, burial in a cemetery or another sacred place adequately corresponds to the piety and respect owed to the bodies of the faithful departed who through Baptism have become temples of the Holy Spirit and in which "as instruments and vessels the Spirit has carried out so many good works"." (ibid)
- ✘ "In circumstances when cremation is chosen because of sanitary, economic or social considerations...the Church raises no doctrinal objections to this practice..." (no. 4)
- ✘ "The conservation of the ashes of the departed in a domestic residence is not permitted... the ashes may not be divided among various family members...it is not permitted to scatter the ashes of the faithful departed in the air, on land, at sea or in some other way, nor may they be preserved in mementos, pieces of jewelry or other objects..." (nos. 6-7)

Let us continue to pray for the dead and to hope in the resurrection that we profess every week in the Creed!