



FROM THE OFFICE OF WORSHIP

LENT AND HOLY WEEK NOTES FOR 2026

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Lenten Season

- ✘ Lent for 2026 begins on February 18 (Ash Wednesday) and ends just before the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on April 2 (Holy Thursday).
- ✘ Catholics 18 to 59 years of age are obliged to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, and should continue this Easter fast on Holy Saturday, as well.
- ✘ Catholics 14 years of age and up are obliged to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, the Fridays of Lent, and Good Friday.
- ✘ The *Alleluia* is not sung or said during the Lenten liturgies.
- ✘ The *Gloria* is not sung or said during Lent except on the Solemnity of Saint Joseph (March 19), the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord (March 25) and at any ritual Masses that call for the *Gloria* (Confirmation or Matrimony).
- ✘ Violet is the color of the season. Rose may be used on the Fourth Sunday of Lent (*Laetare* Sunday).
- ✘ In order to help emphasize the penitential character of the Lenten season (with the exception of *Laetare* Sunday), the altar and sanctuary should not be decorated with flowers. In addition, musical instruments should only be used to support the singing.
- ✘ Crosses in the church may be covered from the conclusion of Mass for the Saturday of the Fourth Week of Lent until the end of the Celebration of the Passion of the Lord on Good Friday. Other sacred images in the church may be covered from the conclusion of Mass for the Saturday of the Fourth Week of Lent until before the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday.
- ✘ Holy water must not be removed from the fonts or replaced with anything else (sand, gravel, etc.) during the Lenten season. While Lent is a time of fasting, it is not a time to fast from our sacramentals. The holy water is removed after the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday and replaced with the waters blessed at the Easter Vigil.

Funerals, Weddings, and Other Sacraments During Lent and Holy Week

- ✘ Funeral Masses are not permitted on the Sundays of Lent, anytime on Holy Thursday, or during the Easter Triduum. The Funeral Liturgy outside Mass should be used on these days if needed. (*continued on next page*)

Sacraments During Lent and Holy Week

(continued from page one)

- ✘ Marriages celebrated during Lent, be they in Mass or out of Mass, should be planned keeping in mind the special nature of the season (especially in terms of decoration and musical selection).
- ✘ The ritual Mass for Marriage is not permitted on Ash Wednesday or the Sundays of Lent. “The Order of Celebrating Matrimony without Mass” can be used these days if needed.
- ✘ No Rites of Marriage at all, in or out of Mass, are permitted during the Easter Triduum.
- ✘ The Sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick may be celebrated on Good Friday and Holy Saturday.

Ash Wednesday

Q.: How should the distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday be handled?

A.: While not a holy day of obligation, Ash Wednesday Masses are often some of the most well-attended every year. What follows are some suggestions on how to celebrate this day:

- ✘ Ashes may be distributed either by making the sign of the cross on the forehead or sprinkled on top of the head.
- ✘ The formula for the imposition of ashes (“Repent, and believe in the Gospel” or “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return”) is said to each recipient while the ashes are distributed to them.
- ✘ Ashes may be distributed during Mass or outside of Mass. The order of service for outside of Mass can be found in the *Roman Missal* at the end of “Ash Wednesday,” or in the *Book of Blessings*, Chapter 52: Order for the Blessing and Distribution of Ashes.
- ✘ While the custom in the USA is to mark the forehead with a cross, sprinkling the ashes on the head remains the custom in other parts of the world such as Spain and Italy. Sprinkling ashes on the top of the head recalls the biblical practice of putting on “sackcloth and ashes” as an act of penance.
- ✘ Celebrations of Ash Wednesday should be limited to Wednesday itself. There is not an “anticipatory Mass” of Ash Wednesday like we would have for Sundays or other holy days that have a proper vigil or are days of obligation.

USCCB Lent/Easter Resources

The USCCB’s Committee on Divine Worship has once again assembled web pages offering resources for Lent, the Triduum, and the Easter season:

<http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/index.cfm>

On this site one can find resources such as:

- ✘ [Lenten Reflection Calendar](#)
- ✘ [Fasting and Abstinence](#)
- ✘ [Baptism and Christian Initiation](#)
- ✘ [Six Ways to Evangelize During Lent](#)
- ✘ [Questions on the Paschal Triduum](#)
- ✘ [Rediscovering the Sacrament of Penance](#)

This will prove to be an invaluable source of information for you as you prepare the celebration of your Lenten and Holy Week liturgies, write homilies or catechetical pieces, etc.

Lenten Fasting and Abstinence

Q.: What is the purpose of fasting and abstinence during Lent?

A.: Both fasting and abstinence can trace their usage back to Old Testament times, and the concept of intentionally limiting the amount or types of food eaten was not foreign to the first Christians. To them, it was not only a sign of one’s sorrow and penance before God, but it was also a pious work that helped unite them more closely to the passion of Jesus.

Today Lent is seen in two ways. First, it is the time of final preparation for those who will enter the Church at Easter, so it has a baptismal character. Second, it is the time when all of the faithful prepare for the passion, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ at Easter through added prayer and listening to the Word of God, giving it a penitential character. To physically deny oneself by fasting and abstaining serves as a tangible reminder of the suffering endured by Christ at His Passion.

And just as a reminder—**every** Friday is still a penitential day in the Church, but the mandate to abstain from meat (outside of Lent) is no longer an obligation in the United States.

FAQs on the Scrutinies

Q.: What are the Scrutinies?

A.: The Scrutinies are a series of liturgical rites that are part of the Lenten preparations for the spiritual benefit of the elect, those who will celebrate the three Sacraments of Christian Initiation during the Easter Vigil. The Scrutinies ritually celebrate the central mystery of life, death, and resurrection in the lives of the elect. From the OCIA, no. 141.: the Scrutinies “reveal what is weak, sick and sinful in the hearts of the elect so that it can be healed; and what is honorable, strong and holy, so that it can be strengthened...to purify minds and hearts...so that the elect may cling more closely to Christ and pursue more vigorously their desire to love God.”

Q.: What and where are the proper texts for the three Scrutinies?

A.: Some liturgies are so important that the given texts must be used without any change for “pastoral reasons”. The three Scrutinies fit this category.

- ✘ Readings: The *Lectioary for Mass*, nos. 745-747 provides no texts in place. The rubrics refer the minister to the readings and chants as given for the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent, Year A – LM, nos. 28A, 31A, and 34A. There is one option given for the Second Scrutiny; Exodus 13:21-22 may replace the First Reading. It is not, however, found in the Lectionary.
- ✘ Whenever a Scrutiny is celebrated, the proper given Year A readings must always be used, no matter what Sunday cycle it currently is. The Church does not permit adapting a Scrutiny to suit other readings or prayers, since Scrutiny texts are intimately tied to the Gospels. But the Church does permit the Year A readings of the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent to replace the ones given for Years B and C – even if a Scrutiny is not celebrated. See the rubrics in the *Lectioary for Mass*, nos. 29B, 30C, 32.B, 33C, 35B, and 36C.
- ✘ Mass Prayers: The *Roman Missal, Third Edition* provides the texts in two places. In the Ritual Masses section are found the proper presidential prayers (Collect, Prayer over the Offerings, and Prayer after Communion); proper inserts for Eucharistic Prayers I, II, and III; as well as the two antiphons. In the Proper of Time section for Lent are found the proper Prefaces for the Samaritan Woman (First Scrutiny on the Third Sunday of Lent), the Man Born Blind (second on the Fourth Sunday), and Lazarus (third on the Fifth Sunday). Note: these Prefaces are always used when the Year A readings are used whether the Scrutiny is celebrated or not.
- ✘ Ritual Prayers: Both the pastoral notes and the ritual texts for all three Scrutinies are found in the *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults*, nos. 141-146; 150-156; 164-177.
- ✘ Music: The ritual text gives the places and recommendations for necessary singing during the celebrations. See also *Sing to the Lord*, no. 205.

Q.: How many Scrutinies are celebrated?

A.: Three are always celebrated. Only the Bishop may dispense from one for a serious obstacle or two in extraordinary circumstances. Pastoral reasons alone are not sufficient.

Q.: When are the Scrutinies celebrated?

A.: Sundays Masses on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent are the proper days. “If for pastoral reasons the Scrutinies cannot take place on these Sundays, other Sundays in Lent or even more convenient weekdays may be chosen.” [OCIA, no. 146] They may be celebrated outside Lent. This, however, requires permission of the Bishop in each instance.

Q.: There is no “combined rite” in OCIA Appendix I for a single celebration with the elect and baptized candidates. Is that a mistake?

A.: No. Scrutinies, which includes an exorcism, are pre-baptismal rites. OCIA, no. 463 reads in part: “Because the Prayer of Exorcism in the three Scrutinies for catechumens who have received the Church’s Election properly belongs to the elect and uses numerous images referring to their approaching Baptism, those Scrutinies of the elect and this Penitential Rite for those preparing for Confirmation and the Eucharist have been kept separate and distinct. Thus, no combined rite has been included in Appendix I.”

Particular Feasts in the Lenten Season

Two very important Solemnities occur during the season of Lent, as well as a feast that is celebrated with much less solemnity!

March 17—Saint Patrick

In a privileged season like Lent, all memorials of saints are observed as optional. Therefore, unless Patrick is the patron of a particular church or parish, the day would either be omitted or observed as a commemoration, with the proper saint Collect replacing the Collect of the day.

March 19—Saint Joseph

The Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, takes precedence over the Lenten weekday. The *Gloria* is to be sung at this Mass, and the Creed is said.

March 25—Annunciation of the Lord

This Solemnity also takes precedence over the Lenten weekday. The *Gloria* is to be sung at this Mass, and the Creed is said.

For both March 19 and March 25, funeral Masses are permitted, but ritual Masses are not.

Saint Joseph and Saint Patrick, pray for us!

Time of Easter Vigil

- ✘ Because one of the primary elements of the Easter Vigil is darkness (“May the light of Christ rising in glory dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds” (*Roman Missal*, The Easter Vigil. No. 14), the time to begin is after nightfall.
- ✘ In the Diocese of Evansville, sunset on April 4 is approximately 7:16 PM CDT, with civil twilight ending at approximately 7:42 PM CDT. Depending on location, complete darkness comes about 15-20 minutes after the end of civil twilight.
- ✘ Therefore, for the sake of unity in the diocese, **celebrations of the Easter Vigil in the Diocese of Evansville should begin no earlier than 8:00 PM CDT (9:00 PM EDT).**
- ✘ The celebration of the Easter Vigil will take place at Saint Benedict Cathedral on April 4 beginning at 8:00 PM CDT.

Veiling of Images during Lent

Q.: What is the purpose of veiling images in church during Lent?

A.: The current option to cover the crosses and other images (such as statues, but not stained glass windows or the Stations of the Cross) has been a practice of the Church for many centuries. While there are a few early practices that may have contributed to this custom, the most likely origin is the tradition in the Middle Ages to cover the beautiful pieces of artwork depicting images of the mysteries of our faith and the representations of the saints. Just as we fast in other ways during the Lenten season in preparation for the Easter celebration, the Church would offer this “fast” for the eyes that is broken with our adoration of the cross on Good Friday and celebration on Easter of the new life Christ won for us and in turn those who are enjoying their fruits of their participation in the life of Christ.

Customarily, violet/purple cloths have been used to cover the images. The practice today still follows the custom since the 17th century of covering the images during “Passiontide,” the last two weeks of Lent prior to Easter.

If images and crosses are not covered for Passiontide, they may instead be covered after the Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday in preparation for the Good Friday and Easter Vigil liturgies. Each parish/pastor has the discretion to decide on this practice.

Holy Oils & Chrism Mass

- ✘ The Mass of Chrism will be celebrated at Saint Benedict Cathedral on **Tuesday, March 31**, beginning at **5:30 PM CDT**.
- ✘ **Do not bring empty oil stocks to the Mass.** Vessels for your holy oils will be provided.
- ✘ Please reverently clean and recycle your vessels from last Chrism Mass.
- ✘ Holy oils from the previous year should be burned or buried.
- ✘ The remaining holy oils are kept at the cathedral. If you are in need of more oils during the year (especially the Sacred Chrism), you can obtain more during normal business hours.

Holy Thursday Place of Repose & Period of Adoration

The end of the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday with its procession with the Blessed Sacrament is a beautiful conclusion to the first of the Triduum liturgies. Here are some things to keep in mind in preparing for this evening:

- ✘ The regular tabernacle of the church should be completely empty before Mass. Be sure to also extinguish the sanctuary lamp.
- ✘ The place of reservation for the Blessed Sacrament should be suitably adorned with flowers and other decorations (since the Lenten season has ended with start of the Evening Mass). It should also allow for the prayer and meditation of the people. It should not take on the appearance of a tomb or be presented as the place of the Lord's burial. The focus should be on the Blessed Sacrament reserved for Holy Communion the next day.
- ✘ If the regular tabernacle of the church is located in a chapel separate from the central part of the church, it may be used as the place of repose.
- ✘ Regardless of location, the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in a closed tabernacle. It is never put into a monstrance for exposition.
- ✘ The faithful should be encouraged to spend time in adoration before the reserved Eucharist this evening.

Perpetual Exposition and the Triduum

A few reminders for those parishes or institutions that have perpetual adoration chapels or celebrate exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on a regular basis:

- ✘ Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament does not take place from the beginning of the Triduum until after the Easter Vigil Mass. This means discontinuing exposition sometime before the beginning of the Evening Mass on Holy Thursday and then resuming it sometime after the conclusion of the Vigil.
- ✘ Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament during this time of the Triduum only takes place in the context of the reserved Sacrament at the place of repose after the Holy Thursday Mass through the beginning of the Celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday. The Eucharist is not exposed in the monstrance during this time but left in the tabernacle of repose.
- ✘ After the Good Friday celebration, any hosts that remain may either be consumed or taken to a suitable place (such as a sacristy cabinet) to be used for viaticum.
- ✘ For those places that will resume exposition right after the Easter Vigil, do not forget to consecrate a host at Mass that can be used for exposition.

Deacons and the Good Friday Liturgy

Q.: May a deacon preside at the Good Friday Celebration of the Passion of the Lord in place of a priest?

A.: Deacons are not permitted to lead the Good Friday Celebration of the Passion of the Lord. The rubrics of the liturgy do not foresee this as an option, and looking at the history and development of the Good Friday liturgy as a "Mass of the Pre-Sanctified" shows it has not been a part of the tradition. In addition, the Triduum liturgies can be seen as one continuous event, since there is no formal liturgical dismissal after Holy Thursday and Good Friday, and no greeting or welcome at the start of the Good Friday liturgy. This would seem to imply that the same priest who presided on Thursday would preside on Friday and Saturday as well!

Deacons, however, should fulfill their proper role in all of the Triduum liturgies including Good Friday. This would include assisting in the proclamation of the Passion, the introductions to the Solemn Intercessions, the Adoration of the Holy Cross, and Holy Communion.

Also, a deacon may preside at other devotions that may be celebrated on Good Friday or other days in Lent such as the Stations of the Cross, or at public celebrations of the Liturgy of the Hours.

To Confirm or Not To Confirm—Adults and Children in the OCIA

Q.: Whom may the priest Confirm in the context of the Easter Vigil celebration?

A.: According to canon law and diocesan policy, the priest (pastor or parochial vicar) has the faculty (and also the obligation) to Confirm in the following cases:

- ✘ Anyone seven years old and up whom has just received Baptism at the Vigil.
- ✘ Any non-Catholic baptized person seven years old and up whom he receives into full communion.

If a child has reached the age of seven (the “age of reason” or “age of discretion”) they are adults for initiation purposes. According to canon law (canon 866), the directives in the *Order of Christian Initiation for Adults* (nos. 304-329), and diocesan policy, the sacraments of initiation for adults are not to be separated unless for a grave reason. Wanting the young person to be able to be Confirmed with their class years later does not qualify as a “grave reason.” Therefore, a child seven years of age or older would receive all of the initiation sacraments at the Vigil

If a child is less than seven years of age and there is no danger of death, the child would only be Baptized and would later celebrate First Communion and Confirmation.

Priests do not have the faculty (outside danger of death) to Confirm Baptized Catholics during the Vigil. The priest should request the faculty to Confirm from the bishop, and then celebrate the sacrament at another time — perhaps one of the Sundays of Easter Time or Pentecost.

Multiple Paschal Candles & the Easter Vigil

Q.: When multiple parishes or churches come together at one church to celebrate the Easter Vigil, can multiple paschal candles for the other churches be used for the Service of Light?

A.: The *Roman Missal*, not envisioning the pastoral situation of cluster parishes, specifies that only one paschal candle is used. To accommodate the particular circumstances, the USCCB Secretariat of Divine Worship has made the following suggestions:

Candles from the other churches could be present at the Vigil, having been prepared in advance, and blessed alongside the main candle (perhaps having deacons or other representatives holding them). In keeping with the rubrics, for the lighting and procession only one candle should be lit (the principal one which will remain in that particular church). As the other candles in the congregation are lit after the second “Lumen Christi” proclamation, the other paschal candles could be lit and held (but not high, in order to maintain the prominence of the principal candle) by someone at their place in the assembly. Once all the candles are extinguished after the Exsultet, the other paschal candles are put aside.

On Easter Sunday, those candles could be taken to each of the missions and carried, lit, in the entrance at the first Mass to be put in place in the sanctuary.

Holy Week and Triduum in Linked Parishes/ Multiple Churches

While we have had the circumstances of linked parishes in the diocese for many years, we also have the situation of parishes with multiple churches still in use. What follows are some guidelines for the preparation of the Triduum liturgies and how these can be applied to our linked and merged settings.

General Considerations

- ✘ Typically, there is only one celebration per parish for Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil. The permission of the bishop is required to celebrate more than one Mass on Holy Thursday or to repeat the Good Friday service in a parish, and these are done only in extraordinary circumstances. There should only be one celebration of the Easter Vigil.
- ✘ Linked parishes should strive to celebrate the Triduum liturgies together (see #43 in the Circular Letter cited above). This not only allows for the sharing of liturgical resources to enhance the Triduum celebrations, but also keeps the priest and many of the other ministers from having to pull “double duty,” fitting multiple celebrations into these already busy days. *(continued on the next page)*

Linked Parishes/Multiple Churches *(continued)*

- ✘ In a parish, there should be only one celebration of each of the Triduum liturgies. If there is a serious concern of space or being able to accommodate all of the faithful who usually attend the Triduum liturgies (outside of the Easter Vigil), the pastor may request permission from the bishop to celebrate another Holy Thursday or Good Friday liturgy. However, the strong preference is to celebrate only one of each of the Triduum liturgies.
- ✘ It would be preferable to celebrate all of the Triduum liturgies from Holy Thursday through the Easter Vigil in the same church building. If one looks at the Triduum liturgies of Thursday through Saturday as three parts of one celebration, it makes sense that they would all be held in the same place.
- ✘ In selecting which church to use, both size of the church (how many people it can hold) as well as having what is needed for all of the celebrations should be considered.
 - > Examples (not an all-inclusive list)
 - > Is the font and its location large enough to accommodate the number of baptisms at the Vigil?
 - > Is there a proper place for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament at the end of Holy Thursday?
- ✘ If possible, it may be helpful to set up a rotation of the Triduum between the available church buildings from year to year (keeping all of the liturgies in one place one year, and then moving them the next year).
- ✘ In those church buildings not being used for the Triduum liturgies, it would be acceptable to celebrate other Holy Week prayers and devotions in them, such as Liturgy of the Hours, Stations of the Cross, etc. Any celebrations such as these, however, should not detract from the celebrations of the primary Triduum liturgies. Easter Sunday Masses may also be celebrated in these churches.

Baptizing Infants at the Easter Vigil

Q.: Can infants be Baptized at the Easter Vigil? And if so, how does this happen?

A.: Certainly! It would be very appropriate if you had an entire family (adults and children) coming into the Church, but it could also just be someone who wanted to have their baby baptized at the Vigil.

The introductory material of the OCIA Combined Rite (nos. 562-594) includes a reference to the Introduction of the *Order of Baptism of Children* (OBC), especially no. 28, which describes how the baptism of infants is celebrated during the Vigil (no. 562). When infants are baptized at the Vigil, the rite of receiving the children (OBC, nos. 32-43) and the prayer of exorcism and the anointing (OBC, nos. 49-51) take place at a convenient time beforehand. At the beginning of the Baptismal Liturgy (no. 567), a sample introduction is provided. Several rubrics from the *Roman Missal* are incorporated into the Presentation of Those to Be Baptized, as well as an optional instruction before the Litany (no. 569; cf. OBC, no. 47). At the Renunciation of Sin and the Profession of Faith, the rubrics clarify that the parents and godparents respond on behalf of the infant (nos. 573 and 574), and the Rite of Baptism provides the questioning of the parents and godparents before immersion or pouring, slightly modified for its new context, as well as some necessary rubrics (no. 575; cf. OBC, nos. 28.3 and 60).

Following the baptisms, the prayer for the Anointing with Chrism differs slightly in the OBC and the OCIA, and here the prayer for children is given, since it will most frequently be used in this instance. Additionally, in the OCIA, the responses to the Explanatory Rites are all made by the baptized adult, while the entire assembly makes these responses in the OBC. For the sake of simplicity, “All:” is given in each instance. At the clothing with a white garment, the prayers of the two Orders differ again, and the prayer from the OCIA is given as more appropriate for the mixed group. While the OBC directs that the handing on of the lighted candle is omitted at the Baptism of infants at the Easter Vigil (no. 28.3), the *Roman Missal* notes that “the candles of the newly baptized are lighted” (no. 51); in this circumstance, the handing on of a lighted candle is maintained for the infants, and the prayer comes from the OCIA rather than the OBC, as more appropriate to the mixed group.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Worship.