



DIOCESE OF BUFFALO
OFFICE OF WORSHIP

Precepts for Celebrating the Liturgical Calendar

*Issued Annually by the Office of Worship to assist you in forming
the liturgical calendar for your parish or congregation.*

The Year of Grace, 2024

With Evening Prayer I of the First Sunday of Advent, the new Year of the Church for 2024 begins. It runs from Sunday, December 3, 2023 through November 30, 2024.

Principal Celebrations of the Liturgical Year 2024	
First Sunday of Advent	December 3, 2023
Ash Wednesday	February 14, 2024
Easter Sunday	March 31, 2024
The Ascension of the Lord (Thursday)	May 9, 2024
Pentecost Sunday	May 19, 2024
The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ	June 2, 2024
First Sunday of Advent	December 1, 2024

Cycles of the Lectionary for Mass	
Sunday Cycle — YEAR B	December 3, 2023 to November 24, 2024
Weekday Cycle — YEAR II	January 9, 2024 to February 13, 2024 May 20, 2024 to November 30, 2024

Holy Days of Obligation

In addition to Sunday, the days to be observed as Holy Days of Obligation in the Latin Rite dioceses of the United States of America, in conformity with Canon 1246, are as follows:

January 1 — Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
May 9, 2024 — Solemnity of the Ascension (Thursday of the 6th Week of Easter)
August 15 — Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
November 1 — Solemnity of All Saints
December 8 — Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception
December 25 — Solemnity of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Following the 1991 decision of the USCCB and with the 1992 confirmation of the Congregation for Bishops, when:

- the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God (January 1st);
- the Solemnity of the Assumption (August 15th);
- or the Solemnity of All Saints (November 1st);

falls on a Saturday or a Monday, the precept to attend Mass is abrogated (removed).

November 1, 2023 (All Saints) falls on a Wednesday, and therefore, the Solemnity of All Saints **is** a Holy Day of Obligation.

January 1, 2024 falls on a Monday, and therefore, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God **is not** a Holy Day of Obligation. (The Feast of the Holy Family is celebrated Sunday, December 31, 2023.)

August 15, 2024 falls on a Thursday, and therefore, the Solemnity of the Assumption **is** a Holy Day of Obligation.

November 1, 2024 (All Saints) falls on a Friday, and therefore, the Solemnity of All Saints **is** a Holy Day of Obligation.

This action only applies to the above days. *This does NOT apply to the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (December 8), the patronal feast of the United States.* The Immaculate Conception, Christmas, and Ascension are Holy Days of Obligation.

When either December 8th or December 25th falls on a Saturday or a Monday the faithful are obligated to attend the Mass for that day in addition to that for the Sunday which either precedes or follows it. Attending the celebration of any one Mass cannot fulfill the obligation for both days.

As noted above, *the Ascension of the Lord is celebrated on Thursday*, and not transferred to the Seventh Sunday of Easter, since Buffalo is part of the ecclesiastical province of New York, who along with Boston, Hartford, Newark, Omaha and Philadelphia retain the celebration on the proper Thursday.

Funeral Masses on Holy Days

“Among the Masses for the Dead, the Funeral Mass holds first place. It may be celebrated on any day except for Solemnities that are Holy Days of Obligation, Thursday of Holy Week (Holy Thursday), the Paschal Triduum, ...with due regard also for all the other requirements of the norm of the law.” (GIRM, 380; emphasis added).

On these days, the body of the deceased may be brought to the church and the *Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass* may be celebrated. Funeral Masses are permitted only on Holy Days when the precept to attend Mass is abrogated.

Funeral Masses on Sundays

GIRM #380 prohibits Funeral Masses on the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter. Furthermore, in the Diocese of Buffalo, Funeral Masses are not allowed on any Sunday, nor are they allowed on the Solemnities of the Immaculate Conception or the Ascension.

Ritual Masses on Sundays and Solemnities

“Ritual Masses are connected to the celebration of certain Sacraments or Sacramentals. They are prohibited on Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter, on Solemnities, on the days within the Octave of Easter, on the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls’ Day), on Ash Wednesday, and during Holy Week, and furthermore due regard is to be had for the norms set out in the ritual books or in the Masses themselves.” (GIRM #372)

Holy Matrimony

If the celebration occurs on a Solemnity (eg. Solemnities of the Blessed Virgin Mary). The question as to whether or not the precept to attend Mass is abrogated *makes no difference*, since these days still rank as Solemnities. *As such, the Mass and readings proper to the day must be used, and not the ritual Mass.*

Baptism and Confirmation

The same principle (GIRM #372) applies to ritual Masses for the conferral of Baptism or Confirmation. When the ritual Mass is not celebrated, one of the readings may be replaced by one chosen from the *Lectionary for Ritual Masses* appropriate to the sacrament celebrated. The final blessing proper to the ritual Mass may always be used.

First Communion

It is appropriate that children should receive their First Communion on a Sunday of Easter (see *Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of Paschal Feasts* #103). Above all, First Holy Communion should reunite families, the parish, and all communicants more closely to the Lord's Supper on Sunday, the Lord's Day.

"...Apart from exceptional cases, it is not particularly appropriate for First Communion to be administered on Holy Thursday of the Lord's Supper. Another day should be chosen instead, such as a Sunday between the Second and the Sixth Sunday of Easter, or the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, or the Sundays of Ordinary Time, since Sunday is rightly regarded as the day of the Eucharist..." (*Redemptionis Sacramentum* #87).

Communal Penance Services in Advent and Lent

Every effort should be made to schedule communal celebrations of the Sacrament of Reconciliation with the opportunity for individual confession during the seasons of Advent and Lent. *No parish may schedule "general absolution."*

Although individual confessions may be scheduled in parishes according to pastoral need, Lenten communal penance services should not be scheduled during the days of the Triduum or the evening of the Chrism Mass, to allow priests and people to attend.

Christmas

In scheduling Masses, care must be taken not to multiply Masses on Christmas Eve to the detriment of Christmas Day itself. *Anticipated Masses on Sundays and Holy Days (Christmas included) are to take place in the evening.* (See Canon 1248 § 1)

In general, the Diocese of Buffalo does not allow Christmas Eve Masses to be scheduled before 4:00 pm. Please contact the Office of Worship if you have questions.

Christmas pageants or "Nativity Plays" for adults or children within Mass are to be avoided. According to Vatican II, the assembly of the baptized is to participate fully, actively, and consciously (see *Sacrosanctum Concilium* #41) in various roles and functions and should never be reduced to passive spectators or an audience, as would be true for pageants, plays, and dramatic presentations.

The Mass is not a historical reenactment of the events of salvation history and care should be taken not to give the impression that the Liturgy of the Word is a play. This is not to say that dramatic elements may not be used. However, in some circumstances,

the need to encourage active participation over entertainment or a passive audience mode should be seriously considered.

Care should be taken, especially at Christmas, not to stage the various liturgies as plays. The Christmas Mass should not be presented as a “birthday party for Jesus,” nor should secular notions of Santa Claus be introduced into the Christmas liturgy.

The Season of Lent

“Lent is ordered to preparing for the celebration of Easter, since the Lenten liturgy prepares for celebration of the Paschal Mystery both catechumens, by the various stages of Christian Initiation, and the faithful, who recall their own Baptism and do penance.

The forty days of Lent run from Ash Wednesday up to but excluding the Mass of the Lord’s Supper. From the beginning of Lent until the Paschal Vigil, the *Alleluia* is not said or sung, whether prior to the Gospel or in the context of any other hymn.

On Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, which is observed everywhere as a fast day, ashes are distributed.” (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, nos. 27-29)

Abstinence

All Catholics who have reached their 14th birthday are bound to abstain totally from meat on the following days: Ash Wednesday, all Fridays of Lent and Good Friday.

Fasting

All Catholics between their 18th and 59th birthdays are also bound to observe the Law of Fast on the following days: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. This practice involves limiting oneself to a single full meal and avoiding food between meals. Light sustenance may be taken on two other occasions in the course of the day.

Easter Duty

After they have been initiated into the Most Holy Eucharist, all the faithful are bound by the obligation of receiving Communion at least once a year. This precept must be fulfilled during the Easter season, unless for a good reason it is fulfilled at another time during the year. This obligation may be fulfilled between February 18, 2024 (First Sunday of Lent) and May 26, 2024 (Trinity Sunday).

Baptism

There is no universal rule that would forbid the practice of baptism during Lent. However, given that Lent is traditionally focused on the preparation for baptism, many parishes have policies that discourage it. This is left to the discretion of the pastor / staff.

Holy Matrimony

While weddings may be celebrated during the Season of Lent (except for the Sundays of Lent), the priest/ deacon preparing the couple should make the couple aware of the special nature of the proposed date for celebration and its penitential character. They should be discouraged from too much pomp or display. (See *Order of Celebrating Holy Matrimony* #32)

The Paschal Triduum

Since Christ accomplished his work of human redemption and of the perfect glorification of God principally through his Paschal Mystery, in which by dying he has destroyed our death, and by rising restored our life, the sacred Paschal Triduum of the Passion and Resurrection of the Lord shines forth as the high point of the entire liturgical year. Therefore the preeminence that Sunday has in the week, the Solemnity of Easter has in the liturgical year. (*Universal Norms* #18)

The Paschal Triduum of the Passion and Resurrection of the Lord begins with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, has its center in the Easter Vigil, and closes with Vespers (Evening Prayer) of the Sunday of the Resurrection.

Funerals

Funeral Masses are not permitted on Holy Thursday morning or during the days of the Easter Triduum. On these days, the body of the deceased may be brought to the church and the *Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass* may be celebrated.

Holy Matrimony

The celebration of Marriage during the Paschal Triduum is to be avoided all together.

Holy Thursday

According to the Church's ancient tradition, all Masses without a congregation are prohibited on this day. The Mass of the Lord's Supper is celebrated in the evening. No additional Masses are to be scheduled. Only where a pastoral reason requires it, and with the permission of the local Ordinary, may another Mass be celebrated. (See *Roman Missal* "Thursday of the Lord's Supper: At The Evening Mass")

Good Friday

"The celebration of the Lord's Passion is to take place in the afternoon, at about three o'clock. The time will be chosen as shall seem most appropriate for pastoral reasons in order to allow the people to assemble more easily, for example, shortly after midday, or in the late evening, however not later than nine o'clock." (*Circular Letter Concerning Preparation and Celebration of Easter Feasts* #63)

Holy Communion may only be distributed during the Solemn Celebration of the Passion. No other communal distribution or Holy Communion may take place on Good Friday (for example, during Stations of the Cross or other secondary services.)

In a situation of grave public need, the Diocesan Bishop may permit or order the addition of a special intention to the Solemn Intercessions.

For the Adoration of the Holy Cross, a single cross without a corpus should be used. (See *Roman Missal "Friday of the Passion of the Lord" #14*)

Penance and Anointing of the Sick are the only Sacraments celebrated on Good Friday and the following day. *Viaticum may be administered at any time.*

Holy Saturday

"On Holy Saturday the Church is as it were at the Lord's tomb, meditating on his passion and death, and on his descent into hell, and awaiting his resurrection with prayer and fasting. It is highly recommended that on this day the Office of Readings and Morning Prayer be celebrated with the participation of the people. Where this cannot be done, there should be some celebration of the Word of God, or some act of devotion suited to the mystery celebrated on this day." (*Circular Letter Concerning Preparation and Celebration of Easter Feasts #73*)

"On this day the Church abstains strictly from the celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass. Holy Communion may be given only in the form of Viaticum. The celebration of marriages is forbidden, as also the celebration of other sacraments, except those of Penance and the Anointing of the Sick.

The faithful are to be instructed on the special character of Holy Saturday. Festive customs and traditions associated with this day on account of the former practice of anticipating the celebration of Easter on Holy Saturday should be reserved for Easter night and the day that follows." (*Circular Letter Concerning Preparation and Celebration of Easter Feasts #75*)

The Easter Vigil

According to a most ancient tradition, this night is "one of vigil for the Lord" and the Vigil celebrated during it, to commemorate that holy night when the Lord rose from the dead, is regarded as the "mother of all holy vigils." It is not an anticipated Mass, but a true vigil, and as such, may not begin before nightfall. *The Easter Vigil should be scheduled 30 to 45 minutes after sunset to assure darkness.*

"The entire celebration of the Easter Vigil takes place at night. It should not begin before nightfall; it should end before daybreak on Sunday". This rule is to be taken according to its strictest sense. Reprehensible are those abuses and practices which have crept in in many places in violation of this ruling, whereby the Easter Vigil is celebrated at the time of day that it is customary to celebrate anticipated Sunday Masses. (*Circular Letter Concerning Preparation and Celebration of Easter Feasts #78*)

Sunset will be at approximately 7:40 PM on Saturday, March 30, 2024.
This means that the Easter Vigil should not begin before 8:10 PM.

Sunset will be at approximately 8:00 PM pm on Saturday, April 19, 2025
and 7:45 PM pm on Saturday, April 4, 2026.

The Easter Vigil is to be celebrated only once in a given church. (See *Roman Missal* "The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night" no. 2)

Nine readings are provided for the Vigil, seven from the Old Testament and two from the New Testament (the Epistle and Gospel), all of which should be read whenever possible, so that the character of the Vigil may be preserved.

Still, for serious pastoral reasons, the number of readings from the Old Testament may be reduced, bearing in mind that the proclamation of the Word of God is a fundamental part of the Easter Vigil. At least three readings should be read from the Old Testament, with their respective responsorial psalms, including always Exodus 14 and its canticle, which should never be omitted.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

The Rite of Election will occur on the First Sunday of Lent, February 18, 2024, at 3:00 PM at Saint Joseph Cathedral. (Please contact the Office of Worship for more information.)

Scrutinies seek to remove all obstacles to holistic conversion of the elect (unbaptized) and deepen their resolve to bind themselves to Christ, to carry out their mission to love God above all else. They take place in the parish on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent. **Year A** readings with appropriate chants are used. The *Roman Missal* contains specific orations and prefaces suited to these celebrations. (See *Roman Missal*, "Ritual Masses: 2. For the Celebration of the Scrutinies")

Please Note: The RCIA is currently undergoing a revision and approval process. However, the current RCIA is appropriate to use for the celebration of rites and sacraments for Easter 2024. More information will follow concerning changes and formation opportunities.

Scheduling Notes for 2023-2024

- Sunday, December 31, 2023 — The Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph
- Monday, January 1, 2024 — Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God
(Not a Holy Day of Obligation)
- Sunday, January 7, 2024 — The Epiphany of the Lord
- Monday, January 8, 2024 — The Baptism of the Lord

- Monday, January 22, 2024 — Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children. Any readings may be used from the *Lectionary for Mass Supplement*, the Mass “For Giving Thanks to God for the Gifts of Human Life,” nos. 947A-947E, or the *Lectionary for Mass* (vol. IV), the Mass “For Peace and Justice,” nos. 887-891. White or Violet may be worn.

- Sunday, February 11, 2024 — Diocesan Celebration of Marriage Anniversaries.
10:30 AM at Saint Joseph Cathedral

- Wednesday, February 14, 2024 — Ash Wednesday

- Sunday, February 18, 2024 — The Rite of Election
3:00 PM at Saint Joseph Cathedral

- Saturday, March 9, 2024 — Saint Joseph the Worker Awards
10:00 AM at Saint Joseph Cathedral

- Tuesday, March 19, 2024 — Solemnity of Saint Joseph

- Tuesday, March 26, 2024 — Chrism Mass
7:00 PM at Saint Joseph Cathedral
(This will include a prayer for the elect and candidates to be fully initiated at the Easter Vigil.) *Please remember to bring the set of plastic oil bottles you received last year for return as you arrive at the Cathedral. A new set will be distributed this year.*

- Please note that weddings are not permitted from Thursday, March 28, 2024 through Sunday, April 7, 2024 (the Triduum and Octave of Easter).

- Thursday, May 9, 2024 — Ascension of the Lord
- Sunday, May 11, 2024 — Seventh Sunday of Easter
- Sunday, May 19, 2024 — Pentecost Sunday
- Monday, May 20, 2024, the Monday after Pentecost, is the Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church. (See [usccb.org/motherofthechurch](https://www.usccb.org/motherofthechurch))
- Sunday, May 26, 2024 — Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

- Saturday, June 1, 2024 — Ordination to the Priesthood
10:00 AM at Saint Joseph Cathedral

- Sunday, June 2, 2024 — The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)
“It is desirable that a procession take place after the Mass in which the Host to be carried in the procession is consecrated. However, nothing prohibits a procession from taking place even after a public and lengthy period of adoration following the Mass.” (see *Roman Missal*); this will mark the end of the parish year of the National Eucharistic Revival and the anticipation of the National Eucharistic Congress.

- Saturday, June 8, 2024 — Ordination to the Permanent Diaconate
10:00 AM at Saint Joseph Cathedral

Scheduling Reminders for Weddings in 2024-2025

- Please note that November 2, 2024, All Souls (the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed) falls on a Saturday and ritual Masses are prohibited. It may be pastorally appropriate to avoid weddings on this day.
- Tuesday, December 31, 2024/Wednesday, January 1, 2025 — The Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God remains a Solemnity in 2025, even though it will not be a day of obligation.

A wedding on December 31, 2024 may be scheduled at the discretion of the pastor and with the permission of the Office of Worship, but the Mass for the Solemnity should be used after 4 pm. Likewise, weddings scheduled on January 1, 2025 should use the Mass for the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God.

- Please note that weddings are not permitted from Thursday, April 17, 2025 through Sunday, April 27, 2025 (the Triduum and Octave of Easter).

Liturgy in the Context of a Family of Parishes

- New policies for sacramental record keeping are in place in the Diocese of Buffalo as a result of the *Road to Renewal*. Please be sure that those who support the liturgy and sacraments as record keepers are well informed of the document recently sent and available on the Office of Worship's website: <https://www.buffalodiocese.org/what-we-do/office-of-worship/>
- Please also take note that on August 7, 2023, notification was sent that there are to be **no scheduled "Communion Services."** *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* may only be used on a Sunday and in an emergency. Please see the full document available at <https://www.buffalodiocese.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/08-2023-Memo-Re-Sunday-Celebrations-in-the-Absence-of-a-Priest.pdf>
- The Office of Worship is happy to meet and consult with your Family of Parishes Liturgy or Spirituality pillars and/or Family Councils.

Notes on COVID-19 and the Liturgy

- The implementation of sensible measures based on the local parish/family and surrounding community may be made at the discretion of the pastoral leadership.
- Prudent decisions should be made by priests, deacons, and other ministers who are experiencing symptoms, not feeling well, have been exposed to or tested positive for COVID-19. (Please follow local health guidelines or contact the Office of Worship for clarification.)
- Parishes are encouraged to reinstitute/retain Communion under both kinds. This may necessitate the recruitment of new Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, and the Office of Worship is happy to work with those in your area to establish formation sessions to increase the numbers of ministers. Applications may now be submitted in advance and training dates and locations will be determined based on the greatest need.

Changes to Liturgical Celebrations

- The RCIA and RCIA adapted for Children will soon become the OCIA and OCIA adapted for children. For now, terminology, celebrations, and all related formation should remain as it has been. More information will follow over the next year on evaluating your RCIA ministry to prepare for the new Order, expected to be published in late 2024.
- Presiders at Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours, and any liturgical celebration that may include a collect should note that in 2021, the phrase “one God, forever and ever” that concluded many collect prayers was revised to omit the word “one.” Please be attentive to praying simply, “God, forever and ever.”