Diocese of Erie

Office for Divine Worship Newsletter

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Inside this issue:

December 2026 Calendar	2-4
Prayer for New Bishop	4
Eucharistic Congress 2029	4
Recurring Information	5

First Sunday of Advent

Sunday, November 29, 2026

As we approach the beginning of another year of the Liturgical Calendar, please note the Lectionary Cycles for 2027 are:

- Sunday Cycle - Year B
- Weekday Cycle - I

The Blessing of an Advent Wreath may take place at the conclusion of the Universal Prayer on this Sunday. See *Book of Blessings,* Chapter 47, Order of the Blessing of an Advent Wreath. The Advent Wreath needs only to be blessed once, perhaps at the Anticipated Mass for the First Sunday of Advent.

Reminder: Placement of the Nativity Scene in the Church

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ, pastors and liturgy planners are reminded that if a Nativity scene is displayed inside the church, it should not be placed in the sanctuary (presbyterium). The Book of Blessings instructs that the manger be set in a location suitable for prayer and devotion and easily accessible to the faithful (nos. 1542–1544). The scene should never obscure the altar, ambo, or presider's chair, but instead invite quiet reflection on the mystery of the Incarnation. Whether inside the church or outdoors, the crèche is meant to inspire prayer and wonder, helping all who see it draw closer to Christ, whose humble birth we joyfully proclaim.

Venite Ad Me: Considerations on the Transmission of the Faith in an Epochal Change

On October 22, 2026, The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith published Venite Ad Me. This document includes a section (paragraphs 90–94) highlighting the essential role of the liturgy as a privileged place of encounter with Christ, where faith is celebrated, nurtured, and handed on through the life of the Church.
The document can be found here**:** Venite ad me considerations (22 October 2026).

In Venite Ad Me we hear of how the Eucharist shapes our hearts:

In the Eucharist, "the encounter with the Risen One becomes a shared and vital act that educates believers not only by "informing" them, but by shaping them from within so that they may become participants in the mystery being celebrated." #90

Catechesis is always a commentary on "being shaped from within" in the Eucharist. In response to families in our diocese who are seeking to participate more fully in Eucharistic life, the Office of Faith Formation and the Office for Divine Worship developed the Sensory Friendly Mass resource guide. This guide is for each parish to read, discuss, and consider so that deeper awareness may inform our Christian discipleship and can be found at the end of this newsletter.

Preorders Begin for the *Liturgy of the Hours, Second Edition*

On July 1, 2026, the two publishers of the full *Liturgy of the Hours, Second Edition* began accepting preorders for volume II (Lent and Easter Time), the first of four volumes to be produced over the next year. Volume II will be released on January 10, 2027, with subsequent volumes available every three months afterward. As a reminder, **the first-use date of the revised Divine Office is Ash Wednesday, February 10, 2027, and the mandatory-use date is December 3, 2028, the First Sunday of Advent that begins the 2029 liturgical year.** A total of eight editions per volume are being produced by Ascension Press and Word on Fire Publishing; prices listed below are retail and do not include preorder discounts offered by the publishers.

Liturgy of the Hours, cont'd.

Ascension Press
(AscensionPress.com/pages/liturgy-of-the-hours, 800-376-0520)

- Regular print editions (4½" × 6¾", 10 pt font, eight ribbons)
  - ◊ Standard (bonded leather) – $69.99 per volume; $264.99 for four volume set
  - ◊ Premium (top-grain goatskin leather) – $129.99 per volume; $489.99 for four volume set
  - ◊ Premium natural grain (full-grain goatskin leather) – $239.99 per volume; $909.99 for four volume set
- Large print editions (5½" × 8.375", 12.41 pt font, eight ribbons)
  - ◊ Standard – $79.99 per volume; $299.99 for four volume set
  - ◊ Premium – $139.99 per volume; $529.99 for four volume set
  - ◊ Premium natural grain – $259.99 per volume; $985.99 for four volume set

Word on Fire Publishing
(LiturgyOfTheHours.com, 866-928-1237)

- Regular print edition (5" × 8", 11.4 pt font, seven ribbons, natural full-grain leather) – $124.95 per volume; $499.95 for four volume set
- Large print edition (6" × 9 ¼", 14 pt font, seven ribbons, natural full-grain leather) – $149.95 per volume; $599.95 for four volume set

December 2026 Liturgical Calendar

Month dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

December 1-2: Advent Weekdays

December 3: Saint Francis Xavier, Priest - Memorial - white

December 4-5: Advent Weekdays

December 6: Second Sunday of Advent

December 7: Saint Ambrose, Bishop, Doctor of the Church - Memorial - white

December 8: The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Patronal Feast Day of the United States of America - Holy Day of Obligation

- Liturgical Color: White
- Ritual Masses (i.e. Order of Matrimony, Funerals) are not permitted.
- The Gloria is sung or said.
- The Creed is said.
- Mass proper is found in the Proper of Saints.
- Solemn Blessing #1 or #15 may be used.
- Today is a solemnity. Incorporating incense, festive music, and a more formal Gospel procession is appropriate.

December 9: Saint Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin, *optional memorial - white*

December 10: Our Lady of Loreto - *optional memorial - white*

December 11: Advent Week

December 12: Our Lady of Guadalupe - Feast - white
Patroness of the Americas

- The Gloria is sung or said.
- The Creed is omitted.

December 13: Third Sunday of Advent (*Gaudete Sunday*)

- Liturgical Color: Rose or Violet
- The Gloria is not sung or said.
- The Creed is said.

December 2026 Liturgical Calendar, cont'd.

December 14: Saint John of the Cross, Priest, Doctor of the Church - Memorial - white

December 15-16: Advent Weekdays

December 17-24: Late Advent Weekday Masses

- The Second part of Advent begins.
- The Advent weekdays from December 17-24 are intended as direct preparation for Christmas (GNLY, no. 42). Except where special devotion exists, the Seasonal Mass should be celebrated (see CSL, nos. 108 and 111; GNLY 56f).
- The prayer texts and readings for Weekday Masses are taken from the specific calendar date.
- The *O Antiphons* begin.
- Preface II of Advent may be used beginning December 17.

December 20: Fourth Sunday of Advent

- The Gloria is not sung or said.
- The Creed is said.
- Preface II of Advent is used.

Christmas Masses

- Vestments: White/Gold
- The Gloria is sung or said.
- The Creed is said. *Remind the assembly that all kneel when the incarnation is mentioned.*
- Solemn Blessing for the Nativity of the Lord (#2) may be used.
- The Blessing of the Nativity Scene can be found in the *Book of Blessings,* Ch. 48.
- The Blessing of a Christmas Tree can be found in the *Book of Blessings*, Ch. 49.
- There are four Mass settings (proper antiphons, readings, and orations) for the Solemnity of the Nativity. The Roman Missal contains four Mass settings for the Nativity of Jesus:
  - ◊ at the Vigil Mass,
  - ◊ at the Mass during the Night,
  - ◊ at the Mass at Dawn, and
  - ◊ at the Mass during the Day
- The *Lectionary for Mass (LM)* likewise has four sets of readings. While Mass formularies ought to correspond to the actual time of day or night, there is greater flexibility for choosing the readings. The *LM* indicates that the first set of readings for Mass at the Vigil "may also be used for Masses on Christmas Day, with the option of choosing from one or other of the three sets of readings according to the pastoral needs of each congregation" (rubric from the *Lectionary for Mass*, 13).
- Christmas and its Octave center on the great truth of the Incarnation: God loves us and sent his Son to be one of us that we might believe and love and have eternal life (see John 3.15-16; GNLY, nos. 32-37).
- The Solemnity of The Epiphany of the Lord continues the Christmas cycle celebrating the ways in which God's love is manifested or revealed to us through his Son, Jesus. The Christmas Season ends with the Feast of The Baptism of the Lord and Ordinary Time begins.

December 24 and 25: Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord

- Vigil Masses for the Solemnity of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ **start at 4:00 pm at the earliest.**

Mass During the Night

- The Christmas proclamation should be sung before the Mass during the Night begins. The text is found in Appendix I of the *Roman Missal.* The entrance song immediately follows the Chant.

December 26: Saint Stephen, the First Martyr - Feast

- Liturgical Color: Red

December 2026 Liturgical Calendar, cont'd.

December 27: Feast of the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph
- Vestments: White
- The Gloria is sung or said.
- The Creed is said.
- Solemn Blessing #2, #3, or Prayer Over the People #25 may be used.
- Blessing of a Family (see *Book of Blessings*, Ch. 1)

December 28: Feast of the Holy Innocents, Martyrs
- The Gloria is sung or said.
- Solemn Blessing for the Nativity of the Lord may be used to unify the days of the octave.

December 29: Fifth Day Within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord
- The Gloria is sung or said.
- Solemn Blessing for the Nativity of the Lord may be used to unify the days of the octave.

December 30: Sixth Day Within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord
- The Gloria is sung or said.
- Solemn Blessing for the Nativity of the Lord may be used to unify the days of the octave.

December 31: Seventh Day Within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord
- The Gloria is sung or said.
- Solemn Blessing for the Nativity of the Lord may be used to unify the days of the octave.

Bishop Persico Publishes Prayer for a New Bishop

With the celebration of his 75th birthday, Bishop Persico published a prayer for a new bishop for the Diocese of Erie and directed its use beginning the First Sunday of Advent, November 30, 2025.

O Almighty God,
Pour forth the Holy Spirit upon the Holy Father and those who assist him
in the discernment of our new bishop.
May the one chosen have the strength to be a compassionate leader,
who models humility and joy.
Grant him the wisdom of Solomon,
the courage of the apostles,
and the tenderness of your Son, the Good Shepherd.
We also pray for the Diocese of Erie that he is called to serve.
May we welcome him with open hearts and work with him
in a spirit of synodality,
called to listen, collaborate, and build unity.
Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church,
St. Joseph, the protector of the Church,
and St. Patrick, the patron of our diocese,
may we journey the path of life with an unwavering focus
on the hope we have in Christ.
For he lives and reigns forever and ever.
Amen.

National Eucharistic Congress 2029

From National Eucharistic Congress Inc. October 21, 2026

The National Eucharistic Congress will return to Indianapolis in the summer of 2029, bringing Catholics from across the United States together once again for a national celebration centered on Jesus Christ, truly present in the Eucharist. Bishop Andrew Cozzens, Chairman of Board of the National Eucharistic Congress Inc., and Archbishop Charles C. Thompson of Indianapolis invite Catholics throughout the nation to begin looking toward the next chapter of the Eucharistic movement in the United States.

Recurring Information: Colds and Flu

People feeling ill should avoid receiving Communion from the chalice. Priests are encouraged to use good pastoral common sense to calm the fears of the faithful during cold and flu season. An example of this might include reminding the faithful not to receive the Precious Blood if they are ill.

Workshops for Liturgical Ministers

If any parish or institution would like a workshop for liturgical ministers, especially Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion or lectors, please contact the Office for Divine Worship. If a parish or institution conducts its own workshop for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, please remember to present candidates for this ministry to the Bishop when they are deemed prepared by the pastor or chaplain of said institution.

Time for Vigil Masses and Anticipated Masses

The time for Vigil Masses and Anticipated Masses in the Diocese of Erie is no earlier than 4:00 pm. This applies to Holy Days of Obligation as well, including Christmas.

Copyrights

According to the United States Copyright Office, if you reproduce, distribute, publicly display, or derive a new piece from a copyrighted work without the permission of the copyright owner, you may have infringed on copyright. That could include putting a poem or song on your website, printing an essay or column in your bulletin, or even streaming a service on your website, Facebook or YouTube that includes the performance of hymns from a hymnal you have purchased. The safest thing a church can do is only to use copyrighted materials when you have the express written permission of the copyright owner. This is generally accomplished by purchasing the appropriate license. The majority of parishes use OneLicense.net.

In worship aids:

- To license the readings for a worship aid, parishes can contact: Mary Elizabeth Sperry at msperry@usccb.org. If you need any other clarification, please call the Office for Divine Worship at 814-824-1271.
- For reprinting excerpts of the Roman Missal in a worship aid, credit is given to the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL).

On screens:

- The Committee on Divine Worship does not permit projecting readings and liturgical texts on screens during the Liturgy. The bishops believe that since people spend much time on screens, the Sacred Liturgy should be a prayerful break from that. They also think screens distract from the liturgy itself.

DIOCESE *of* ERIE
Sharing the Catholic faith in northwest Pennsylvania

Sensory-Friendly Mass:

A guide for parishes

Pastoral guidelines for welcoming and accompanying persons with sensory needs at the Eucharist.





Rationale

Many Catholic families with members with disabilities do not attend Mass for various reasons. They may feel stigmatized or fear being disruptive. They have had a negative experience while attending in the past. They may feel that it is just too difficult.

Having a Mass that is specifically welcoming to these families is an essential step in bringing them back to church. A Sensory-Friendly Mass does not require a tremendous amount of change on the part of the parish.

Many people benefit from the stigma-free environment of a Sensory Friendly Mass. These liturgies benefit people with sensory processing issues, autism, intellectual and developmental disabilities and adults with Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

Developing a Sensory-Friendly liturgy (even once a month) for the special needs community would allow for a more welcoming environment for families like these. It would remove the stigma for them, and empower them to more fully enter into the sacrifice of the Mass.





The goal is to welcome, support and help all members of the Body of Christ participate more fully in the Eucharist.

Celebrate the same Eucharist with the same reverence

The Eucharist remains the center of Christian life. A Sensory-Friendly Mass is not a lesser or informal celebration of the Eucharist. The priest should celebrate the Mass prayerfully, reverently, and according to the approved liturgical books. Sensory adaptations should focus principally on the environment, pastoral approach, and manner of participation.

Foster an environment free of stigma

The most important characteristic of a Sensory-Friendly Mass is an environment in which individuals and families do not fear being judged because of their behavior.

The priest should therefore:

- Expect that people may move during Mass.
- Avoid calling attention to an individual's behavior.
- Avoid asking parents or caregivers to remove someone simply because the person is making noise or moving.
- Welcome alternative seating, fidgets, noise-canceling headphones, and other appropriate aids.
- Understand that participation may look different from person to person.
- Communicate through word and example that everyone belongs.

Do not presume to know someone's needs

Sensory challenges vary considerably from person to person. What is calming for one individual may be distracting or uncomfortable for another. Priests and parish ministers should listen to individuals, families, caregivers, and advocates when planning the celebration rather than presume to know their needs.

Explain the purpose without labeling people

Public communication should be welcoming and positive. Avoid language suggesting that people with disabilities are a problem to be accommodated. Instead, emphasize that the parish desires to welcome all members of the Body of Christ and to provide an environment in which everyone can participate.

Ministers of Hospitality

Hospitality ministers are particularly important at a Sensory-Friendly Mass.

They should understand that:

- Movement is permitted.
- Vocalizations or other sounds should not automatically be interpreted as disruptive.
- Individuals may leave and return to the church.
- Families may use alternative seating.
- Fidgets, headphones, communication devices, and other sensory aids may be used.
- Parents and caregivers should not be made to feel embarrassed.
- The appropriate response to unexpected behavior is patience and welcome.



Hospitality ministers should never attempt to publicly redirect a person because of sensory-related behavior. If assistance is needed, the minister should quietly ask the caregiver what would be helpful.

The Physical and Sensory Environment

A Sensory-Friendly Mass should intentionally reduce unnecessary sensory stimulation.

Possible adaptations include:

Lighting



- Lower the intensity of the lighting when possible.
- Avoid unnecessary changes in lighting.
- Avoid sudden or flashing lights.
- Consider the effect of bright lighting around the sanctuary and entrance areas.

Sound



- Avoid unnecessary loud or sudden sounds.
- Keep microphone volume at a comfortable level.
- Be attentive to sudden sounds from doors, bells, microphones, or other equipment.

Seating



Families should be free to choose seating that works best for them.

Consider making available:

- Seating near an exit.
- Seating toward the back or sides of the church.
- Additional space for individuals who need to move.
- Alternative seating when appropriate.

Sensory aids



Families should be explicitly welcomed to bring appropriate sensory aids, including:

- **Noise-canceling headphones.**
- **Communication devices.**
- **Alternative seating.**
- **Other items that help an individual participate.**

Music

Music should be carefully planned with the sensory needs of the congregation in mind.



Possible adaptations include:

- Using a smaller musical ensemble.
- Limiting amplification.
- Avoiding sudden changes in volume

The goal is not necessarily to eliminate music but to consider how the musical environment can facilitate rather than impede participation.

Holy Communion

Persons with disabilities have the same right to receive the Eucharist as other Catholics when they meet the ordinary requirements for reception.



Priests and extraordinary ministers should:

- ☑ Exercise patience.
- ☑ Avoid rushing communicants.
- ☑ Be attentive to individual circumstances.
- ☑ Make reasonable accommodations when needed.
- ☑ Speak with families beforehand when special arrangements may be helpful.

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This resource was prepared by the

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The Office of Faith Formation offers courses through the National Catholic Partnership on Disability for accessible, learner-centered and practical training.

Scholarships are available.

For more information and resources available to purchase, please contact the Office of Faith Formation.