



Office for Divine Worship Newsletter

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Lenten Practices 2026

The season of Lent begins this year on Ash Wednesday, February 18, 2026, and concludes when the Paschal Triduum of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of the Lord begins at the start of the Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday, April 2, 2026.

The following practices and regulations are promulgated and binding for all Latin Rite Catholics in the Diocese of Erie for Lent and the Paschal Triduum, 2026. Eastern Rite Catholics who may be attending Latin Rite parishes have their own proper regulations and should consult their own eparchy or parish.

1. Traditional Lenten practices of PRAYER, FASTING, and ALMSGIVING, and other forms of self-denial, are recommended most warmly by the Church. Daily Mass is particularly encouraged.
2. ASH WEDNESDAY, ALL FRIDAYS IN LENT, and GOOD FRIDAY are days of abstinence from eating meat for those 14 years of age and older.
3. ASH WEDNESDAY AND GOOD FRIDAY are also days of fasting for those ages 18 to 58 inclusive. (On these days, those bound by the law of fasting may take one full meal. Two smaller meals, sufficient to maintain strength according to one’s needs, are also permitted. Eating between meals is not permitted, but liquids including milk and fruit juices are allowed. When health or work is seriously affected, the law does not oblige.)
4. On HOLY THURSDAY, no celebration of the Mass is to begin anywhere in the diocese earlier than 4:30 pm without the explicit approval of Bishop Persico.
5. Although it does not include the Liturgy of the Eucharist, by its very nature the GOOD FRIDAY service is celebrated by a priest only.
6. All celebrations of the EASTER VIGIL are to begin after nightfall (which is defined as approximately one hour after local sunset.) Nightfall is about 9:00 pm this year. To balance pastoral need and liturgical prescriptions, Bishop Persico has decreed that the Easter Vigil in the Diocese of Erie is to begin at 8:30 pm or any later time. Any start time earlier than 8:30 pm must receive explicit approval from the Bishop.

Proper Disposal of the Paschal Candle

Old paschal candles, as blessed objects (a sacramental) must be appropriately disposed. This could involve burning the candle in a devotional manner (privately as opposed to publicly and liturgically) or even burying the candle in blessed ground. Candles are made to be burned, however, and it is better to find a way to either recycle or burn the wax.

Holy Oils and Return of Oil Bottles

Each year, in preparation for the Chrism Mass, the pastor should ensure that all old oils are collected from the ambry or repository, including all vessels containing oil for the sick, and disposed of.

What is to be done with the oils that may be left over from the previous years?

They are to be disposed of either by burning or pouring into the ground. They can be burned by soaking cotton or paper with them and lighting that – some parishes place the soaked cotton in the Easter fire on Holy Saturday night. They can be buried by digging a hole in the ground near the church and pouring the oils in.

Holy Week Reminders

1. On HOLY THURSDAY, no celebration of the Mass is to begin anywhere in the diocese earlier than 4:30 pm without the explicit approval of Bishop Persico.
2. GOOD FRIDAY is a day of abstinence from eating meat for those 14 years of age and older. It is also a day of fasting for those ages 18 to 58 inclusive. (Those bound by the law of fasting may take one full meal. Two smaller meals, sufficient to maintain strength according to one's needs, are also permitted. Eating between meals is not permitted, but liquids including milk and fruit juices are allowed. When health or work is seriously affected, the law does not oblige.)
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Pastoral Note on the Passion Narratives

From the USCCB Committee on Divine Worship Newsletter, January 2024

The Chairmen of the Committees on Divine Worship and Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs issued a memo to the publishers of worship aids, hymnals, and missals on February 1, 2023. The memo requires the following statement to be printed before the text of the Passion narrative on Good Friday in all future publications beginning in 2024. In the 1990s and again in the 2000s the Committees provided guidance on the preparation of homilies and created a similar statement to be included in worship aids alongside the proclamation of the Passion during Holy Week to help ensure that the proclamation of the Lord's Passion is not misused to promote anti-Jewish sentiment.

The Passion narratives are proclaimed in full so that all see vividly the love of Christ for each person. In light of this, the crimes during the Passion of Christ cannot be attributed, in either preaching or catechesis, indiscriminately to all Jews of that time, nor to Jews today. The Jewish people should not be referred to as though rejected or cursed, as if this view followed from scripture. The Church ever keeps in mind that Jesus, his mother Mary, and the apostles all were Jewish. As the Church has always held, Christ freely suffered his passion and death because of the sins of all, that all might be saved.

Four Publishers to Produce One-Volume Major Extracts of the *Liturgy of the Hours*

After the selection of publishers to produce the full four-volume edition of the *Liturgy of the Hours, Second Edition*—announced in the November-December 2025 *Newsletter* as Ascension Press and Word on Fire Publishing—the Committee on Divine Worship reviewed proposals at its November 2025 meeting for the publication of major extracts of the Divine Office: one-volume editions with at least Lauds, Vespers, and Compline. Publishers of the four-volume edition were ineligible to apply.

Four publishers have been selected, pending the completion of the license agreement process, to receive five-year exclusive contracts for producing major extracts of the *Liturgy of the Hours*. They are: Catholic Book Publishing Corp., Liturgical Press, Magnificat, and Midwest Theological Forum. More information will be released by each publisher in the coming weeks and months and be reprinted in a future issue of the *Newsletter*.

The USCCB Secretariat of Divine Worship is devoting 2026 and the first half of 2027 to the publication of the four-volume editions of the breviary. Once that process is complete, work will turn to the review and publication of the one-volume major extracts; they are expected to go on sale in mid-2028. In addition, various minor extracts of the Divine Office—*General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours*, Daytime Prayer, Compline, etc.—will be published at some point during 2027 or 2028.

HOLY WEEK 2026

March 29: Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

March 30-April 1

- Ritual Masses are prohibited this week and weddings outside Mass are discouraged.
- On Good Friday and Holy Saturday, the sacraments are not celebrated.
- Funeral Masses are permitted on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Holy Week.

March 30: Monday of Holy Week

Chrism Mass: Saint Peter Cathedral, 1:00 pm

March 31: Tuesday of Holy Week

April 1: Wednesday of Holy Week “Spy Wednesday”

April 2: Thursday of Holy Week (Morning)

- Last day of Lent - Lent concludes with the celebration of the Lord’s Supper.
- Morning Prayer: Pss II Season Weekday

April 3: Friday of the Passion of the Lord (Good Friday)

Day of Fasting and Abstinence

April 4: Holy Saturday (Morning)

Easter Vigil after 8:30 pm

April 5: Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord

Masses for the Neophytes and a Pentecost Celebration During Easter Time

The *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults* provides helpful guidance for the pastoral care of the newly baptized adults at Easter:

#247 Since the distinctive spirit and power of the period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy derive from the new, personal experience of the sacraments and of the community, its main setting is the so-called Masses for neophytes, that is, the Sunday Masses of the Easter season. Besides being occasions for the newly baptized to gather with the community and share in the mysteries, these celebrations include particularly suitable readings from the Lectionary, especially the readings for Year A. Even when Christian initiation has been celebrated outside the usual times, the texts for these Sunday Masses of the Easter season may be used.

248 All the neophytes and their godparents should make an effort to take part in the Masses for the neophytes and the entire local community should be invited to participate with them. Special places in the congregation are to be reserved for the neophytes and their godparents.

The homily and, as circumstances suggest, the Universal Prayer should take into account the presence and needs of the neophytes.

249 To close the period of postbaptismal catechesis, some sort of celebration should be held at the end of the Easter season near Pentecost Sunday; festivities in keeping with local custom may accompany the occasion.

April 2026 Liturgical Calendar

April 6 - 12

Octave of Easter

- The first days of the Easter Season make up the Octave of Easter and are celebrated as solemnities of the Lord. (*Ceremonial of Bishops*, 373)
- The *Gloria* is to be sung or said during the Octave of Easter.
- The Sequence is optional during the days of the Octave (GIRM, 64).
- The double Alleluia is added to the dismissal formulary during the Octave of Easter (Easter Vigil, 69).
- The Paschal Candle should be lit and remains by the ambo until Pentecost.
- Consider using the Sprinkling Rite instead of the Penitential Act.
- The Creed is not said.
- Preface I of Easter is used.
- Solemn Blessing #6 for Easter Time may be used during the Octave.

April 12: Second Sunday of Easter

“Sunday of Divine Mercy”

- The celebration of Divine Mercy flows from the Church’s most important day, which is Easter Sunday, thus the faithful should be able to celebrate and recognize it as such.
- Devotional practices to the Divine Mercy may not take place during Mass.
- On this Sunday of Divine Mercy, prayers for the plenary indulgence that are offered today should be led by priests after Masses.
- For more information on Divine Mercy: usccb.org/pray.
- The *Gloria* is sung or said.
- The Creed is said.
- Since it is the last day of the Octave, the Sequence may be sung.
- Use Preface I of Easter with Eucharistic Prayer I.
- Solemn Blessing #6 for Easter Time may be used with the double Alleluia.

April 13 - 18

Easter Weekday

April 19 - Third Sunday of Easter

- The Paschal Candle is lit.
- A Sprinkling Rite may take place.
- The *Gloria* is sung.
- The Creed is said.
- There is NO double Alleluia in the final dismissal.

April 20-24

Easter Weekday

April 25: Feast, Saint Mark, Evangelist - red

- The Paschal Candle is lit.
- A Sprinkling Rite may take place.
- The *Gloria* is sung or said.
- The Creed is omitted.
- Use Solemn Blessing #17 “The Apostles”.
- The Order for the Blessing of Fields and Flocks may be used today. See *Book of Blessings*, nos. 966-985.

April 26: Fourth Sunday of Easter

“Good Shepherd Sunday”/World Day of Prayer for Vocation

- The Paschal Candle is lit.
- A Sprinkling Rite may take place.
- The *Gloria* is sung.
- The Creed is said.
- There is NO double Alleluia in the final dismissal.

April 27-28
Easter Weekday

April 29: Saint Catherine of Siena, Virgin and Doctor of the Church (Memorial) - white

April 30
Easter Weekday

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 directs 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.

Catechetical Sunday 2026 Theme Announced

At its November meeting, the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis chose the theme as: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me... to bring good news to the poor" (Lk 4:18). In his homily for the Jubilee of Migrants on October 5, Pope Leo XIV reminded us that our salvation provided by God "is fulfilled when we take responsibility and, with the compassion of the Gospel, care for the suffering of others."

Eucharistic Congress 2029

Courtesy of Catholic News Service:

The National Eucharistic Congress, Inc. is thrilled to share that initial steps preparing for the 11th National Eucharistic Congress in 2029 have begun. The location for the event has not been shared but organizers of the event will provide more details in the near future.

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 mosperry@uscgb.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.