

LENT AND EASTER GUIDELINES

The Lent and Easter regulations are provided here for use during Lent and the Easter Triduum.

ASH WEDNESDAY

BLESSING AND DISTRIBUTION OF ASHES

The blessing and imposition of ashes takes place only on Ash Wednesday, ordinarily during the celebration of the Eucharist. The Roman Missal contains the Rite for the Blessing of Ashes within Mass. The Order for the Blessing and Distribution of Ashes outside of Mass is found in the *Book of Blessings*. If the Eucharist is not celebrated, the blessing and distribution is to take place within the celebration of the Liturgy of the Word. The minister for the blessing of ashes within the Mass is a bishop or priest. The minister for the blessing of ashes during a Liturgy of the Word is a bishop, priest or deacon. Other persons may be associated with the bishop or priest or deacon in the imposition of ashes: e.g. extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, and other lay persons, when there is a true pastoral need. These persons do not, however, bless the ashes. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may bring blessed ashes to the sick and those confined to their home. If a minister is not available, a member of the family or another person may bring blessed ashes to a shut-in, using one of the formulas in the Roman Missal to impose the ashes.

LENT AND EASTER GUIDELINES

THE LENTEN SEASON

A distinction is to be made between Lent and the Easter Triduum. Strictly speaking, Lent ends with the beginning of the Triduum on Holy Thursday. The Ordo notes: "Lent runs from Ash Wednesday until the Mass of the Lord's Supper exclusive on Holy Thursday".

FASTING AND ABSTINENCE

Fasting is to be observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday by all Catholics who are 18 years of age but not yet 59. Those who are bound to fast may take only one full meal. Two smaller meals are permitted if necessary to maintain strength according to each one's needs, but eating solid foods between meals is not permitted.

Abstinence from meat is to be observed by all Catholics 14 years or older on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and on all Fridays of Lent. The determination of certain days as obligatory days of penance should not be understood as limiting the occasions for Christian penance.

MAINTAINING THE SPIRIT OF THE SEASON OF LENT

The Spirit of the season of Lent should be maintained throughout the weeks of Lent. The

obligation to observe penitential days of the Church is serious. Failure to observe individual days of penance is not necessarily considered serious. No one should be scrupulous in this regard. People should seek to do more rather than less, since fast and abstinence on the days prescribed should be considered a minimal response to the Lord's call to penance and conversion of life.

EASTER VIGIL

TIME FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE EASTER VIGIL

The Roman Missal states: "The entire celebration of the Easter Vigil must take place during the night, so that it begins after nightfall and ends before daybreak on the Sunday." No Mass may precede the Easter Vigil. Pastors are reminded that daylight savings time this year will begin at 2:00 a.m. on Sunday, March 10, which is the Fourth Sunday of Lent. This year, 2013, the Vigil will take place during Central Daylight Savings Time. The United States Naval Observatory states that on Holy Saturday, March 30, 2013, the end of civil twilight (beginning of night) is 7:42 p.m. Central Daylight Time. Therefore, in the Archdiocese of New Orleans, the Easter Vigil Liturgy may not begin before 8:00 p.m. Central Daylight Time.

WEDDINGS, BAPTISMS, AND FUNERALS

WEDDINGS

Weddings may not be celebrated on Sundays of Lent, during the Easter Triduum, or on Holy Saturday after the Vigil.

BAPTISMS

The Roman Missal states that baptism is one of the four parts of the Easter Vigil, celebrated "as day approaches, with new members reborn in Baptism". The RCIA is geared and planned for the reception of the sacraments of initiation at the Vigil. The *Rite of Baptism of Children* states: "To bring out the Paschal character of baptism, it is recommended that the sacrament be celebrated during the Easter Vigil or on Sunday when the Church commemorates the Lord's resurrection."

FUNERALS

Funerals may be celebrated on Holy Thursday Good Friday, and Holy Saturday, but not within the context of Mass. The Eucharist may not be celebrated or distributed at a funeral on these days.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS FROM LITURGICAL DOCUMENTS

FROM THE RITE OF PENANCE: “The season of Lent is most appropriate for celebrating the sacrament of penance. Already on Ash Wednesday the people of God has heard the solemn invitation ‘Repent and believe in the Gospel.’ It is therefore fitting to have several penitential celebrations during Lent, so that all the faithful may have an opportunity to be reconciled with God and their neighbor and so be able to celebrate the paschal mystery in the Easter Triduum with renewed hearts” (13). *The Rite of Penance ritual book contains two sample Lenten penitential services.*

FROM THE *GENERAL INSTRUCTION OF THE ROMAN MISSAL*:

“Moderation should be observed in the decoration of the altar. (...) During Lent it is forbidden for the altar to be decorated with flowers. Exceptions, however, are Laetare Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent), Solemnities and Feasts” (305).

“In Lent the playing of the organ and musical instruments is allowed only to support the singing. Exceptions are Laetare Sunday (the Fourth Sunday of Lent), Solemnities, and Feasts” (313).

FROM *SING TO THE LORD*:

“During the season of Lent, alternate acclamations [to the *Alleluia*] with their proper verse are used, as found in the *Lectionary for Mass* (or, when there is only one reading before the Gospel, the Psalm alone may be used). The Gospel Acclamation may be omitted when it is not sung” (163).