



# DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

## Office of Worship

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2110 Broadway, Sacramento, CA 95818 - 916-733-0211 - [gmccavoy-jensen@scd.org](mailto:gmccavoy-jensen@scd.org)

# Guide to the Liturgical Year 2021

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## Parish Solemnities

In every parish the day commemorating the parish's title (patron saint, mystery of the Lord, etc.<sup>1</sup>) is celebrated as a solemnity<sup>2</sup>, as is the anniversary of the dedication of that church<sup>3</sup> and, in all parishes, the dedication of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament.<sup>4</sup>

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## Year B: Mark

*This shortest of all New Testament gospels is likely the first to have been written, yet it often tells of Jesus' ministry in more detail than either Matthew or Luke (for example, the miracle stories at Mk 5:1–20 or Mk 9:14–29). It recounts what Jesus did in a vivid style, where one incident follows directly upon another. In this almost breathless narrative, Mark stresses Jesus' message about the kingdom of God now breaking into human life as good news (Mk 1:14–15) and Jesus himself as the gospel of God (Mk 1:1; 8:35; 10:29). Jesus is the Son whom God has sent to rescue humanity by serving and by sacrificing his life (Mk 10:45).<sup>5</sup>*

In preparation for the liturgical year, it may be helpful for preachers, perhaps in a gathering with some lectors or others, to read the Gospel aloud all the way through, in order to have a greater sense of the Evangelist's emphases and style.

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## Advent

### The Advent Wreath

In this time of pandemic, promoting practices like lighting Advent Wreaths in the domestic church will be important to help the Faithful celebrate the mysteries of Christ. It may be blessed at home by a parent<sup>6</sup>, so it is helpful to provide families access to the prayer or refer them to *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*. During Mass the Wreath is blessed after the Universal Prayer during the first Mass celebrated in Advent. It may be placed in the sanctuary so long as it does not block the view of the altar, ambo, or chair<sup>7</sup>. Is it wrong to repeat the blessing at all the First Sunday of Advent liturgies? Despite the title of the blessing, both options

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<sup>1</sup> *The Order of the Dedication of a Church and an Altar* Chapter II #4

<sup>2</sup> *Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the Calendar* #59(4)(c)

<sup>3</sup> *Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the Calendar* #59(4)(b)

<sup>4</sup> *Diocesan Statutes* #123 §2(a)

<sup>5</sup> <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/mark/0>

<sup>6</sup> *Book of Blessings* #1514

<sup>7</sup> *Book of Blessings* #1512

for the prayer invoke a blessing upon “us” as we light the candles, rather than upon the wreath itself. Lighting the candles without the blessing is envisioned in the rite only for the “Second and succeeding Sundays of Advent”.<sup>8</sup>

### Advent Penance Services

The Rite of Penance includes sample penitential services for Advent.<sup>9</sup> “When the sacrament of penance is celebrated in these services, it follows the readings and homily, and the rite of reconciling several penitents with individual confession and absolution is used (nos. 54-59, *Rite of Penance*)”.<sup>10</sup> These liturgies continue to be important for the Faithful during a pandemic. The current guidelines still need to be followed regarding the size of the assembly, the wearing of masks, social distancing while maintaining the seal of confession, etc.

### Christmas

Like the Advent Wreath, the crèche may be blessed at the beginning of its respective liturgical season, but it must not be placed in the sanctuary.<sup>11</sup> Here again it is worth encouraging families to celebrate the liturgical rite of blessing for the manger or nativity scene at their home. If a Christmas Tree is used in the church it may be blessed as well, as may Christmas Trees used in the home, as well as the home itself,<sup>12</sup> according to the respective liturgical rites.

### Feast of St. Blase (February 3)

The blessing of throats may take place in Mass after the Universal Prayer, as part of a brief celebration of the Word of God, or during Morning or Evening Prayer following before the gospel canticle<sup>13</sup>. The candles used for the blessing should be blessed the day before<sup>14</sup>. However, the pandemic seems a valid pastoral reason for blessing the whole assembly with extended hands rather than individually with candles<sup>15</sup>.

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## Lent and Easter

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, a season in which the faithful are called to reflect on the Paschal Mystery more intently. It is a time of spiritual renewal and to examine one’s relationship with God and others more carefully. It is also a time in which catechumens prepare to receive the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil. The Church calls everyone, therefore, to a spirit of penance through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

### Fasting and Abstinence

In order foster a spirit of repentance and unite ourselves more closely to Christ, Church law requires the observance of Abstinence and Fasting during Lent.<sup>16</sup> (For further study, see Pope Paul VI’s apostolic constitution on the subject.<sup>17</sup>)

### Abstinence

All persons, 14 years and older, are obliged to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and all Fridays of Lent. “. . . [Any] parish or diocesan institution or group which sponsors an event which includes a meal is not to

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<sup>8</sup> *Book of Blessings* #1513

<sup>9</sup> *Rite of Penance* Appendix II, II

<sup>10</sup> *Rite of Penance* Appendix II, “Preparing Penitential Celebrations”, #4

<sup>11</sup> *Book of Blessings* #1544

<sup>12</sup> *Book of Blessings*, “Order for the Blessing of Homes During the Christmas and Easter Seasons”

<sup>13</sup> *Book of Blessings* #1626

<sup>14</sup> *Book of Blessings* #1627

<sup>15</sup> *Book of Blessings* #1628

<sup>16</sup> *Code of Canon Law* #1249-1253

<sup>17</sup> *Apostolic Constitution Paenitemini of the Supreme Pontiff Paul VI on Fast and Abstinence*

serve meat on any Friday during the year”.<sup>18</sup> Other forms of abstinence, including abstinence from alcoholic beverages, television, video games, the Internet and social media, are also beneficial.

### Fasting

Everyone from ages 18 to 59 is obliged to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Voluntary fasting on other weekdays of Lent, especially on Wednesdays and Fridays, is highly recommended. Fasting is understood to mean that one full meal may be eaten. Two other small meals may be eaten, but together they should not equal a full meal. Eating between meals is not permitted.

When health or ability to work would be seriously affected, neither the law of fasting nor the law of abstinence obliges. If in doubt, one’s parish priest or confessor should be consulted. Airport workers, travelers, and others while on board ships or airplanes are dispensed from the laws of fast and abstinence for the duration of their journey (except on Good Friday). It is desirable that they perform some other pious act instead.

### Prayer

Catholics are urged to read and pray with sacred Scripture more intently during Lent, and to deepen their faith by reading the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The faithful are encouraged to participate in special devotions offered by the parish, especially parish penance services and Eucharistic adoration. Other devotions such as the Rosary, the Divine Mercy Chaplet, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and praying for vocations to the priesthood and religious life are also encouraged.

### *The Sacrament of Reconciliation*

Lent is a privileged time for celebrating the Sacrament of Penance. The faithful are obliged to confess their sins at least once a year.<sup>19</sup> To that end, parishes are encouraged to provide ample opportunity for the faithful to partake of the Sacrament of Reconciliation by expanding their confession schedule during Lent. You might consider, for example, adding an extra rite of reconciliation on a weekday evening. Public parish penance services are strongly encouraged and may be combined with the Roman “stations” with or without a procession.<sup>20</sup> Please note, general absolution is not permitted.

### *Lenten Mass Schedule*

The faithful are urged to attend Mass on weekdays as often as possible, especially during Lent. Daily Masses during Lent should be scheduled to facilitate attendance.

### *The Stations of the Cross*

The Stations of the Cross are to be celebrated in each parish on Fridays during Lent and parishioners should be encouraged to participate.

### *Special day of penance and prayer*

The second Wednesday of March is to be observed as “[a] day of penance for negative attitudes and discrimination toward people of differing cultures, ethnicity and race; and prayer for unity in our diversity, for equality, mutual respect and peace among all peoples”.<sup>21</sup>

### Wedding Masses

Wedding Masses may not be celebrated during the Easter Triduum, on Sundays of Lent, Ash Wednesday, or during Holy Week. Marriages may take place at other times during Lent according to the proper liturgical

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<sup>18</sup> *Diocesan Statutes* #127

<sup>19</sup> *Code of Canon Law* #989

<sup>20</sup> *Roman Missal*, Proper of Time, Lent (introduction #1-2); see also *Rite of Penance* Appendix II, I

<sup>21</sup> *Diocesan Statutes* #123 §3(c)

norms and provisions, but it is contrary to the penitential spirit of the season to have elaborate weddings or lavish receptions.

### Funeral Masses

Funerals are not to be celebrated on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, or Holy Saturday, nor on the Sundays of Lent. When pastoral considerations necessitate that a funeral be celebrated on these days, the Liturgy of the Word with the Final Commendation and Farewell may be conducted.

### Paschal Triduum

No Masses are to be offered on Good Friday nor on Holy Saturday except the Easter Vigil in the Holy Night. The Easter Vigil begins after nightfall which in our diocese is 8:35 p.m. this year.<sup>22</sup> For additional helpful information beyond what is provided in the Roman Missal, see the related Circular Letter.<sup>23</sup>

### Easter Duty

All Catholics who have been initiated into the Holy Eucharist are bound to receive holy communion worthily at least once during the Easter Season. In the United States, the Easter duty may be fulfilled through the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. Catholics are encouraged to receive Communion as often as possible, not only during Eastertide, but throughout the year. However, “[anyone] conscious of a grave sin must receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to Communion”.<sup>24</sup>

### Almsgiving

From earliest times giving to the poor, or almsgiving, has been an invaluable spiritual practice, a religious duty, a form of penance, an expression of Christian charity, and an aid to interior conversion. Therefore, all Catholics are urged to give generously to assist the poor and support the charitable works of the Church, especially through their local parish and the Annual Catholic Appeal.

The faithful are also encouraged to visit the sick, the homebound, the aged, and those in prison, remembering the words of our Lord Jesus Christ who said, “As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:40). Fasting and abstinence together with almsgiving and charitable works unite us to the crucified Christ reflected in the image of our brothers and sisters who suffer.

### Covering Crosses and Images

*In the Dioceses of the United States the practice of covering crosses and images throughout the church from this [Fifth Sunday of Lent] may be observed. Crosses remain covered until the end of the Celebration of the Lord's passion on Good Friday, but images remain covered until the beginning of the Easter Vigil.*<sup>25</sup>

### Initiation

*The Christian Initiation of adults and children of catechetical age includes at one celebration: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. In accord with the ancient practice of the Church, these sacraments are to be received together and in their proper order.*<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year-and-calendar/triduum/roman-missal-and-the-easter-vigil> (see footnote 1)

<sup>23</sup> *Circular Letter Concerning Preparation and Celebration of Easter Feasts*, Congregation for Divine Worship, 1988

<sup>24</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1385

<sup>25</sup> *Roman Missal*, instruction for the Fifth Sunday of Lent

<sup>26</sup> *Guidelines for the Implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults for the Diocese of Sacramento*, October 2016, #103.6.1

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## All Souls Day

The remembrance of loved ones who have died is important for Christian spirituality. On All Souls Day consider utilizing means beyond the liturgical celebration to recognize the deceased. These means might include tolling the bells, utilizing a Book of Names of Dead, or putting something commemorative on the parish website and social media.

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## Devotions

The various forms of healthy popular piety found in the diverse communities of our diocese are an important part of our spirituality. They often flow with the liturgical year and provide opportunities for catechesis, sometimes of people who do not otherwise often come to liturgical celebrations. For further reading on these opportunities for evangelization, see the *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy*.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines*, Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 2001