

Guidelines for Lent and Easter 2023

*The annual observance of Lent is the special season for the ascent to the holy mountain of Easter. Through its twofold theme of repentance and baptism, the season of Lent disposes both the catechumens and the faithful to celebrate the paschal mystery. Catechumens are led to the sacraments of initiation by means of the Rite of Election, the Scrutinies, and catechesis. The faithful, listening more intently to the word of God and devoting themselves to prayer, are prepared through a spirit of repentance to renew their baptismal promises.
(Ceremonial of Bishops, 249).*

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Reference abbreviations:

CB Ceremonial of Bishops

*CL Circular Letter concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts
(Congregation for Divine Worship, 1988)*

GIRM General Instruction of the Roman Missal

OCF Order of Christian Funerals

OM Order of Mass

RCIA Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

RM Rite of Marriage

RP Rite of Penance

1) HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

Covid-19 and other viral and respiratory illnesses continue to pose health challenges, especially for those who are immunocompromised.

If celebrants or parishioners are sick with symptoms of Covid-19, the flu, the common cold, upper respiratory infections, or any other communicable disease, they are asked to please not come to church. This sacrifice is an act of charity, and a source of blessings for both the individual and the community.

The sign of peace with physical contact (i.e., handshake) may be shared with people nearby. However, a reverent bow and the spoken words “Peace be with you” are recommended. All people are asked to please respect their neighbours’ comfort levels.

Holy Communion is to continue to be distributed only under the form of the bread. Communion from the Chalice or by intinction remains suspended at this time.

Please also review with the latest guidance from the Bishop as posted at <https://www.rcdvictoria.org/news/responsetocovid19-0>

2) LENT AND THE WORSHIP ENVIRONMENT

During Lent the altar should not be decorated with flowers. The Fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday), solemnities, and feasts are exceptions to this norm. On the Fourth Sunday of Lent rose-colored vestments may be used (*CB 252*). The practice of covering statues, images and crosses during the season of Lent is permitted. Images in the church may be covered from the conclusion of the Mass for Saturday of the Fourth Week of Lent until the beginning of the Easter Vigil.”(*Ordo*.) The cross is covered on Good Friday (*Roman Missal: 5th Sunday of Lent and CL 26 and Ordo*). Crosses are uncovered following the celebration of the Lord’s Passion on Good Friday.

In the past, some parishes have emptied the baptismal font and other receptacles for holy water during the entire Lenten Season. While well intentioned, this does not reflect a sound liturgical theology or practice. The use of holy water as a sacramental is a primary symbol of our baptism and has long been encouraged by the Church for the devotion of the faithful. Liturgical norms indicate that the fonts may be emptied of holy water only at the beginning of the Triduum. Sand is not to be placed in the baptismal font.

3) REGULATIONS FOR FAST AND ABSTINENCE

The following may be reproduced in parish bulletins for the purpose of reminding the faithful of the regulations for fast and abstinence:

Ash Wednesday, February 22, 2023 and **Good Friday, April 7, 2023** are days of fast and abstinence throughout the universal church. Fridays of Lent are also compulsory days of abstinence throughout the universal church. In Canada, Catholics may substitute an act of charity in place of abstinence. However, it is strongly encouraged that some form of penitential discipline be undertaken.

Abstinence is observed by all 14 years of age and older. On days of abstinence no meat is allowed. *Fasting* is to be observed by all people 18 years of age and older, who have not yet celebrated their 59th birthday. On a fast day one full meal is allowed. Two other meals, sufficient to maintain strength, may be taken according to each one's needs, but together they should not equal another full meal. Eating between meals is not permitted, but liquids, including milk and juices, are allowed.

Note that when health or ability to work would be seriously affected, the law does not oblige. When in doubt concerning fast and abstinence, the parish priest should be consulted.

Fasting, almsgiving, and prayer are the three traditional disciplines of Lent. The faithful and catechumens should undertake these practices seriously in a spirit of penance and of preparation for baptism or of renewal of baptism at Easter.

4) THE CELEBRATION OF RITES AND SACRAMENTS DURING LENT

The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults

The *Rite of Election* (for those not yet baptized but already enrolled as Catechumens) takes place on the 1st Sunday of Lent, February 26, 2023. This year the celebration will take place at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Victoria during the 11:00 am Mass. Details have been sent to pastors and RCIA coordinators should be aware. Any questions can be directed to Margaret Gwyn at mgwyn@rcdvictoria.org.

The *Rite of Welcome* for baptized candidates preparing for Reception & Confirmation and Holy Communion or for those celebrating Confirmation alone during the Easter Season may be celebrated before Lent begins, or on the Second Sunday of Lent, March 5, 2023 (*RCIA 459-472*), It must not be celebrated on the same Sunday as that of the Rite of Election.

The *Scrutinies* for the Elect (the non-Baptized preparing for Baptism) are celebrated on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent. The Mass at which the scrutiny takes place may use the texts from the *Ritual Mass for the Celebration of the Scrutinies* found in the Roman Missal. The Mass of the Sunday may be celebrated in lieu of the Scrutiny Mass." The Scrutiny prayers take place after the Homily and Creed.

The Sacraments of Initiation

Because Lent is oriented toward the celebration of the sacraments of initiation at Easter, care must be taken to maintain this central focus. Honoring the most ancient of customs, the baptism of infants normally should not take place during Lent except in the case of emergency or pastoral necessity. Infant baptisms during the Easter Season follow the traditional custom of the Church. As such, the celebration of confirmation and the reception of first communion are discouraged during Lent, but are most appropriate during the Easter Season.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

During Lent the faithful should be urged to take a greater and more fruitful share in the Lenten liturgy. It is very appropriate for the Sacrament of Reconciliation to be celebrated during Lent in a more solemn form, as described in the *Rite of Penance (CB 251)*. The faithful should be clearly and positively encouraged to receive this sacrament during Lent. Schedules for confessions and communal celebrations should be arranged in each parish so that all may be served adequately. Ideally, the faithful would celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation before the Sacred Paschal Triduum begins; however, it is also permitted to offer this sacrament on Good Friday and Holy Saturday. Efforts should be made to educate and plan accordingly. Priests are encouraged to make the Sacrament of Reconciliation generously available to our people. Under no circumstances is the sacrament to be celebrated using Form 3 (General Absolution).

The Sacrament of Marriage

Marriages during the season of Lent are not to be encouraged. However, if a marriage does take place, there should be a marked moderation in festivity. No flowers are allowed in the sanctuary (*CB 252*). The celebration of marriage (and the convalidation of marriage) is not permitted during the Sacred Paschal Triduum (*RM*).

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick

The sick may be anointed on any day of Lent and throughout the Sacred Paschal Triduum.

Communion for the Sick and Viaticum

Communion may be brought to the sick on all days of Holy Week **except** Holy Saturday. On Holy Saturday Communion may be given only as viaticum (to the dying).

Funerals during the Season of Lent and the Easter Triduum

Good liturgical practice would suggest reflecting the liturgical season in the choice of music and scripture. The season of Lent also reflects a change in the color of vesture, namely violet (*OCF 39*).

On Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday a Funeral Mass may not be celebrated. On Holy Thursday the body of the deceased may be brought into the church for *Funeral Liturgy outside Mass* using the *Order of Christian Funerals*. A Mass for the deceased should be offered as soon as is convenient after Easter Sunday (*OCF 107-203*).

5) PARTICULAR LITURGIES DURING THE SEASON OF LENT AND THE EASTER TRIDUUM

Ash Wednesday, February 22, 2023

The blessing and distribution of ashes may take place at either a celebration of the Eucharist or at a Liturgy of the Word.

- The blessing and distribution of ashes follow the homily.
- The Priest places ashes on the head of all those present who come to him, and says to each one: “Repent, and believe in the Gospel” or “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (*Roman Missal: Ash Wednesday*. Deacons or other ministers who are distributing ashes are to do likewise).
- The Penitential Act is omitted in all celebrations of the Eucharist on this day.
- The Season of Lent begins at MIDNIGHT on the morning of Ash Wednesday. It is not possible to anticipate Ash Wednesday with a Vigil Mass (or a Liturgy of the Word with the Distribution of Ashes) on Tuesday evening.

Chrism Mass, Thursday, March 30, 2023

The Chrism Mass will be celebrated this year at St. Peter’s Church in Nanaimo at 7:00 p.m. No other services or meetings that may conflict with the Chrism Mass are to be scheduled that evening in the diocese. Bishop Gary Gordon will preside.

- Priests are to bring their own alb and cincture for Mass; chasubles and stoles will be available at St. Peter’s.
- The Holy Oils will be distributed in the Church at the conclusion of the Chrism Mass as is the custom. Each parish should designate a person to come forward to receive the oils when called to do so.
- Please deliver your Holy Oil containers either to St. Peter’s or to the Cathedral by March 24, 2023, along with the bag in which they came. Please have them properly cleaned according to norms for purification of sacred oils before dropping them off.

- Old Holy Oil must be burned, and any water used to clean Holy Oil containers must be disposed of in the ground. Do not dispose of Holy Oil or the water down the drain.

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord, April 2, 2023

On this day the Church remembers Christ's entrance into Jerusalem to accomplish the Paschal Mystery. The commemoration on this day, with the blessing of palms or cedar branches and the procession, is not an historical re-enactment of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem but rather a ritual action that marks our entry into Holy Week and the celebration of the Christian Passover.

- Three forms are offered for the beginning of the liturgy on this day: the procession, the solemn entrance, and the simple entrance. Masses beginning with either the solemn entrance or the procession omit the penitential rite.
- The Passion proclaimed on this day is essential to the liturgy and cannot be omitted. It may be proclaimed (either read or chanted) using one, three, or more readers. Lay persons are allowed to do any of the parts but normally the priest (or deacon) takes the part of Christ. Apart from the main parish Mass it is permitted to read the short version of the passion if this is deemed to be pastorally beneficial.
- Red Vestments are worn for both the Procession and the Eucharistic Liturgy which follows.

Holy Thursday, April 6, 2023

- Lent ends with the beginning of the Mass of the Lord's Supper, which is the principal Liturgy of the day. The tabernacle is empty (and open) before the Liturgy begins.
- Communion is permitted under the form of the bread only, due to the ongoing risk of Covid-19 and other serious illnesses. Enough bread should be consecrated at this Mass for the Liturgy of Good Friday as well.
- Only the celebration of the Mass of the Lord's Supper is permitted on Holy Thursday and this Mass should take place in the evening or late afternoon. It is not permitted to celebrate the Mass of the Lord's Supper in the morning. All efforts should be made that there be only one Mass of the Lord's Supper, which would include the many languages and cultures of a particular parish community. If pastoral needs of a particular ethnic group in a parish so dictate, another Mass of the Lord's Supper may be celebrated in their language.
- During the singing of the *Glory to God* the church bells, both outdoors and indoors, are rung. The bells remain silent until the *Glory to God* at the Easter Vigil.
- The washing of the feet (mandatum) should be celebrated in a way that allows for people to participate visually. The washing of the feet is an optional ceremony and may be omitted for pastoral reasons. The washing of hands to replace the washing of feet is NOT permitted. The feet of both men and women may be washed.
- The reception of the Holy Oils may take place in individual parishes either before the celebration of Mass or at another time that seems more appropriate.

- Following the *Prayer after Communion*, the *Blessed Sacrament* is transferred to the place of Reservation. This may be the usual tabernacle if it is in a separate chapel or area removed from the sanctuary. The place of reservation should be nobly yet simply decorated.
- Under no circumstances is the Blessed Sacrament to be exposed in a monstrance or ciboria. (CL 55, 56)
- The faithful should be encouraged to spend some time in adoration throughout the remainder of the evening. There is no adoration after midnight (CL 55, 56).
- *Under no circumstances is it permitted to reserve the Precious Blood for adoration on Holy Thursday and for distribution on Good Friday (Norms #30).*
- After Mass, the altar is stripped. It is fitting that any crosses in the church be covered with a red or purple veil. Votive candles should not be lit before the images of saints (CL 57).
- If Holy Thursday Mass is celebrated in a Church, that same Church must have a Good Friday celebration. Adaptation to this norm may be necessary when multiple communities are being served by one priest in a given area of the Diocese.

Good Friday, April 7, 2023

- The Liturgy of the Hours, particularly Morning Prayer, is strongly encouraged.
- The celebration of the Lord's Passion, the principal celebration of this day, should take place about 3:00 pm. If pastoral need dictates, there may be another type of celebration at another time during the day (eg, Children's Liturgy of the Word, Stations of the Cross). This second or third celebration ought to be different from the main service of the day and is not to include the distribution of Holy Communion.
- The Passion may be proclaimed or chanted using one, three, or more readers. Lay persons are allowed to do any of the parts. Normally the priest or the deacon takes the part of Christ.
- During the veneration of the cross, only one cross should be used. Please note that a cross must be used, not a crucifix.
- Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday should take place with a simple bow to the Cross. Pastors / administrators and parishioners must not kiss the Cross.
- Red Vestments are worn for all liturgical celebrations on this day including Morning Prayer and the Stations of the Cross.
- This Liturgy may be celebrated in the absence of a priest by the lay faithful in those parishes/missions that have no priest.

Holy Saturday, April 8, 2023

- The Liturgy of the Hours, particularly Morning Prayer, is strongly encouraged.
- According to custom, the Blessing of Food may take place before or after the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday or on Easter morning for consumption at the first meal of Easter, when

fasting is ended and the Church is filled with joy. According to Liturgical Norms, it is not appropriate to sing Easter Hymns or verses containing the “Alleluia” before the solemn intonation at the celebration of the Easter Vigil.

- Only the Easter Vigil may be celebrated on the evening of Holy Saturday. The Easter Mass may not be anticipated. For those parishes which share a pastor, it is possible to have only ONE Easter Vigil for both communities and then on Easter Sunday to have Easter Masses scheduled.
- The Easter Vigil should begin at a time that allows for new fire to break the darkness of night. For 2023, the sun will set at 7:54 pm. In an ideal situation, the Vigil should be scheduled to begin no earlier than 8 p.m.
- The Lucernarium calls for a “blazing fire” to be prepared outside of the Church. Prudence dictates that this fire must be supervised, that there a fire extinguisher in the vicinity of the fire, that there be a responsible person who is capable of extinguishing the fire, and that there be a means of readily contacting the fire department if the fire gets out of control.
- The Easter Candle must be made of wax, never be artificial, be renewed each year, be only one in number, and be of sufficiently large size, that it may evoke the truth that Christ is the light of the world (*CL 82*).
- The Easter candle is lighted for all liturgical celebrations of the season (*CB 372*).
- The Exsultet (Easter Proclamation) should be sung at the Ambo by one who can do so with grace and beauty.
- At least three of the seven Old Testament readings must be proclaimed. The reading from Chapter 14 of the Book of Exodus with its canticle may never be omitted.
- The Glory to God should be sung. The ringing of the Church bells accompanies this hymn.
- Communion is permitted only under the form of the bread.
- Pastors, by virtue of their office, have faculties given by the law to confirm any adult they baptize or receive into the Church at the Easter Vigil (or at any other time). If the candidate to be confirmed is already baptized Catholic, then pastors and other priests must receive delegation from the Bishop’s Office to perform the Confirmation, even at the Easter Vigil. That is:
 - Adults and children of catechetical age being baptized during the Easter Vigil (RCIA 562-594) are to be confirmed by the presiding priest (RCIA 588).
 - Adults and children of catechetical age who are being received into the Church through the Act of Reception and Confirmation are to be confirmed by the presiding priest.
 - Adults and children of catechetical age who are already baptized Catholic who are to be confirmed at the Easter Vigil may only be confirmed by the presiding priest if permission in writing has been given by the bishop.
- Candidates for full Communion may be brought into Full Communion at the Easter Vigil but they may also be received into the Church at any time throughout the year.
- Infants ought not to be baptized at the Easter Vigil unless their parents are also being baptized that same night.

Easter Sunday and the Easter Season

The fifty days from Easter Sunday (April 9, 2023) to Pentecost (May 28, 2023), audibly and visually, are celebrated in joyful exultation as one feast day, or better, as one "great Sunday." The first eight days of the Easter Season make up the Octave of Easter and are celebrated as solemnities of the Lord (*CB 371, 373*).

- At all Masses on Easter Sunday the *Renewal of Baptismal Promises* and its accompanying *sprinkling rite* replace the Creed. A *Rite of Sprinkling* may appropriately replace the more usual *Penitential Act* during the Easter Season, at the very least on the Sundays of Easter including Pentecost.
- The *Ordo* reminds us that the Easter Sequence may be sung or recited during the entire Octave of Easter (Easter Sunday through the Second Sunday of Easter inclusive).
- Instead of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, especially during Lent and Easter Time, the Baptismal Symbol of the Roman Church known as the Apostles' Creed may be used. (OM)
- The double *Alleluia* is added to the *sung* dismissal during the octave (Easter Vigil through the Second Sunday of Easter inclusive) and on Pentecost and the Vigil of Pentecost (*CB 373*).

The Solemnity of the Ascension, May 21, 2023

The Solemnity of the Ascension now has a Vigil Mass with proper orations assigned for use.

The Solemnity of Pentecost, May 28, 2023

- The Solemnity of Pentecost now has a proper (extended) Vigil Mass. As many as four Old Testament readings (with Responsorial Psalms and proper orations) may be used before the intonation of the Glory to God.
- The sequence of Pentecost is sung or recited at all Masses, both of the vigil and the day.
- After Pentecost, the Easter candle is returned to its place near the baptismal font. It is not extinguished after the Gospel of either Ascension or Pentecost.
- The double *Alleluia* is added to the sung dismissal during Masses of Pentecost and its Vigil.