OFFICE FOR DIVINE WORSHIP
MARCH 2026

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LITURGICAL CALENDAR ITEMS

FEAST OF SAINT KATHARINE DREXEL, VIRGIN
Tuesday, March 3, 2026
The commemoration of Saint Katharine Drexel is celebrated as a Feast in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia with a *Gloria* and the specified texts in the *Lectionary for Mass*.

LENT, THE SACRED PASCHAL TRIDUUM AND EASTER TIME 2026

APOSTLES' CREED DURING LENT AND EASTER TIME
Consideration should be given to the use of the Apostles' Creed during Easter Time as provided in the *Roman Missal*. The Order of Mass, number 19, states: *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.*

CONFESSIONS DURING LENT

Lent provides an excellent occasion to catechize about the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, to follow more faithfully the form for *The Order for Reconciling Individual Penitents (Chapter I)* and *The Order for Reconciling Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution (Chapter II)* in the *Order of Penance*.

Resources for the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, based on the revised 2023 *Order of Penance*, are available on the website of the Office for Divine Worship, http://www.odwphiladelphia.org/sacred-liturgy/archdiocesan-guidelines/.

THE DATES FOR THE OBSERVANCE OF THE *24 HOURS FOR THE LORD*
March 13-14, 2026

Additional information on *24 Hours for the Lord* 2026 will be published separately.

WAY OF THE CROSS AND BENEDICTION OF THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT

Typically, the Way of the Cross, with the movement from station to station, does not take place in conjunction with exposition and benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament. Exposition with the reading of the Word of God and time for adoration and then Benediction may follow the Way of the Cross.

VEILING OF STATUES

In the dioceses of the United States, crosses in the church may be covered from the conclusion of the Mass for the Saturday of the Fourth Week of Lent until the end of the Celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday. Statues 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. Additional information can be found on the website for the Office for Divine Worship.

> ***Additional Information for Liturgical Preparation***
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> The *Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts* (*Paschale Solemnities*), by the Congregation for Divine Worship, January 16, 1988, is posted on the website of the Office for Divine Worship. This letter provides helpful pastoral, theological and liturgical (as well as liturgical music) information for pastors and preparers of the Sacred Liturgy for Lent, the Sacred Paschal Triduum and Easter Time.

THE *GLORIA* IS SUNG AT ALL WEEKDAY WEDDING MASSES DURING LENT

According to the third and current edition of the *Roman Missal,* the Gloria is sung, even during Advent and Lent, when the Ritual Mass for the Celebration of Marriage is used. The Penitential Act is always omitted during a Wedding Mass.

TIME OF THE EASTER VIGIL 2026

The Easter Vigil is the first Mass of Easter Sunday and is not in any way to be considered an Anticipated Mass for Easter Sunday. This is why the discipline of the Church insists that it should not begin before nightfall in any circumstance. It may be helpful to know that sunset, according to a variety of models, occurs approximately at 7:35 PM on April 4, 2026. This information is provided at this time to assist with calendar planning for 2026. In general, given the variable date for Easter, it seems best to schedule the Easter Vigil each year for 8:00 PM or later.

THE BLESSING OF MORE THAN ONE PASCHAL CANDLE AT THE EASTER VIGIL

When there is a need to bless more than one paschal candle, for example when a pastor also administers another parish, the following plan, proposed by the USCCB's Divine Worship Secretariat in 2010, may be followed:

- Additional paschal candles may be prepared in advance of the Easter Vigil and blessed alongside the primary candle, with deacons or other parish representatives holding them.
- In the lighting of the paschal candle at the blessed fire and at the beginning of the procession, which follows, only the primary paschal candle should be lit.
- After the deacon intones *Lumen Christi* for the second time in the middle of the church, the supplemental paschal candles may be lit when the congregation's small candles are taken up and lit; however, supplemental paschal candles should not be held high at this time, to keep the principal candle prominent in the view of the assembly.
- Supplemental paschal candles may be extinguished along with the congregation's small candles at the conclusion of the *Exsultet*.
- At Masses on Easter Sunday, supplemental paschal candles may be brought to the other worship sites, where they can be lit and carried to the sanctuary in the entrance procession at the first Mass in those locations.

CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

The Office for Divine Worship has the responsibility for direction, guidance and support of pastors and those who collaborate with them in the formation of adults for Christian Initiation. Additional information on Christian Initiation for adults can be found on the website for the Office for Divine Worship, under the heading *Christian Initiation.*

CELEBRATION OF THE SCRUTINIES

THE HANDING ON OF THE CREED AND THE HANDING ON OF THE LORD'S PRAYER, AND THE RITES OF IMMEDIATE PREPARATION

The Rites belonging to the Period of Purification and Enlightenment, nos. 138-205, found in the ritual book, *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults*, are to be carefully observed for the Elect. Any questions regarding these rites may be directed to the Office for Divine Worship.

RECEPTION OF BAPTIZED CHRISTIANS INTO THE FULL COMMUNION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults* allows for people baptized in another ecclesial community, although never treated as catechumens, to benefit from the doctrinal and spiritual formation and catechesis of the unbaptized. Additionally, the use of the Combined Rites for catechumens and candidates gives the candidates an important sense of the Sacred Liturgy and participation with the Church leading to Confirmation and Communion. However, many candidates do not require a full program parallel to the catechumenate and so their formation may be separate and distinct from the unbaptized catechetical sessions.

Preparation and celebration of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation for baptized non-Catholics are an essential element of their Reception (See Order of Christian Initiation of Adults, no. 482).

Reception of Candidates and Valid Baptism and Conditional Baptism

All non-Catholic Christians seeking full communion must be validly baptized. The following norm is to be observed in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia regarding the reception of candidates into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church:

Baptism is the doorway to all of the Sacraments. Therefore, the sacred minister needs moral certitude that a person was baptized with the Trinitarian formula and the triple water pouring/immersion before other Sacraments are celebrated. This moral certitude requires more than the evidence of a baptismal certificate and must be the case in each individual circumstance. Such moral certitude can often be readily obtained through inquiry with the candidate. When moral certitude is lacking, a conditional Baptism is necessary (see Canon 869).

Additional information on valid baptism and conditional baptism can be found on the website for the Office for Divine Worship.

CONFIRMATION FOR ROMAN CATHOLIC ADULTS

The ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation for baptized Roman Catholics is the Bishop. Typically, this occurs during the pastoral visit of the Bishop to the parish. *Every effort should be made to prepare Catholic Adults for Confirmation to participate in the parish celebration with the Bishop.*

Additionally, the Archbishop will celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation on Pentecost Sunday, May 24, 2026, during the 11:00 AM Solemn Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul. The candidates for this sacramental celebration are baptized Roman Catholics who have been properly catechized for Confirmation (and if needed, for the reception of First Communion). Information about this celebration for pastors and those who assist with the formation and reception of the Sacraments of Initiation will be distributed soon and then also found on the website of the Office for Divine Worship.

If for some serious reason, a school age baptized Roman Catholic is unable to be confirmed by the Bishop during his pastoral visit to the parish, then this candidate, with the permission of the pastor, may be presented for the Sacrament of Confirmation on Pentecost Sunday. The pastor's permission is to be included with the registration forms to be sent to the Office for Divine Worship.

A pastor who foresees the genuine pastoral need to confirm an adult baptized Roman Catholic can do so only with the specific delegation of the Bishop (see Canon 882). The Archbishop gives this faculty to all priests of the Archdiocese to confirm Roman Catholic Adults, 16 years of age and older, on any occasion from Palm Sunday through Pentecost Sunday. This delegation is required for the validity of the Sacrament in the case of a Roman Catholic candidate. If you have any questions about this faculty, please contact the Office for Divine Worship. There is no need for an additional letter requesting this faculty during the period specified by the Archbishop. *Priests are reminded that only the 2016 revised The Order of Confirmation may be used to celebrate the Sacrament.*

PLEASE NOTE

Full Sacramental Initiation—Baptism, Confirmation and the first Reception of Holy Communion—apart from the Easter Vigil, outside of the immediate danger of death, requires the permission of the Archbishop (see OCIA, no. 331). Archbishop Perez delegates the Office for Divine Worship to give this permission. Please contact the Office for Divine Worship for such circumstances.

If there are any questions about the celebration of Baptism in unusual or irregular circumstances, please contact the Office for Divine Worship.

COLDS AND FLU
AND THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRED LITURGY

- Ministers of Holy Communion should wash their hands before Mass begins, or even use an alcohol-based anti-bacterial solution in the pew before distributing, and after purifying their fingers after the distribution of Holy Communion;

- ❖ People feeling ill should avoid receiving Communion from the chalice.

Priests are encouraged to use good pastoral common sense to allay the fears of the faithful during cold and flu season. An example of this might include refraining from the use of the Sign of Peace during the celebration of Mass and reminding the faithful not to receive the Precious Blood if they are ill.

UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

WORKSHOPS FOR LITURGICAL MINISTERS

If any parish or institution would like a workshop for liturgical ministers, especially Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, please contact the Office for Divine Worship. If a parish or institution conducts its own workshop for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, please contact the Office for Divine Worship to obtain the mandate letters from the Archbishop of Philadelphia for the new Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

Please see the flyer attached to this mailing with the full schedule of liturgical ministry workshops for 2026.

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

GENERAL NORMS

- **All Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, without exception, are to have a current appointment letter from the Archbishop.**

- **Extraordinary Ministers who serve in institutions and schools throughout the Archdiocese are typically commissioned for service in their parishes and likewise commissioned for service in the institution and/or school.**

- Candidates are to be fully initiated practicing Catholics, high school graduates, not in an invalid marriage, recognized for faith and devotion to the Holy Eucharist as well as for service in the parish/institution/school. Pastors/chaplains are reminded to be discerning in the invitation to members of the lay faithful to carry out this ministry.

- Pastors and chaplains are encouraged to send new Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to the archdiocesan formation and training sessions. Letters of

Appointment from the Archbishop will then follow. *Veteran Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are also welcome to attend.*

- Pastors and chaplains are reminded to inform the Office for Divine Worship if they conduct their own formation and training as well as to send to this office their request for new Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. Request forms can be found on the Office for Divine Worship website. Letters of Appointment from the Archbishop will then follow.

- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are appointed for a three-year term and for the place where they are commissioned. Terms may be renewed if agreeable to both the pastor/chaplain and the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. All records of active Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are maintained by the parish/institution/school.

- **Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are commissioned after participation in a formation and training session, according to the form found in the *Book of Blessings*, Chapter 63, "Order for the Commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion."**
- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion **only** serve in the parishes/institutions/schools for which they are commissioned.

GUIDELINES FOR THE BUILDING AND RENOVATING OF CHURCHES AND CHAPELS IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia, in addition to what is described in the liturgical ritual books, follows the guidelines of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for the building and renovating of churches and chapels. These guidelines are found in the USCCB document, *Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture and Worship*, 2007, Fifth Printing, revised.

GUIDELINES FOR CHAPELS IN RECTORIES

The Office for Divine Worship, according to the Archdiocesan Policy Manual, has oversight for Chapels in Rectories. Pastors are asked to review these guidelines for compliance. Please direct any questions or concerns about chapels in rectories to the Office for Divine Worship.

RECURRING INFORMATION

THE PRAYER TO SAINT MICHAEL, THE ARCHANGEL

Many parishes and institutions within the Archdiocese of Philadelphia pray the prayer to Saint Michael in conjunction with the celebration of Mass. You are reminded that this devotional prayer is to take place outside of Mass. It is not to be prayed as the concluding prayer of the Universal Prayer nor as part of the Communion Rite.

TIME FOR VIGIL MASSES AND ANTICIPATED MASSES

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

THE MASS SCHEDULE FOR HOLY DAYS WHEN THE OBLIGATION IS SUSPENDED

In the United States, there are three Holy Days, Solemnities, when the obligation to participate in Mass is suspended when the observance falls on a Monday or a Saturday—the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God (January 1), the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (August 15), and the Solemnity of All Saints (November 1). In these instances, the Mass schedule certainly can be modified. However, there should be the celebration of one Mass at least for the benefit of the faithful who desire to attend Mass.

LINKS TO HELPFUL INFORMATION

THE LITURGICAL EXCHANGE

For information about the new Liturgical Exchange in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, please see: https://www.liturgicalexchange.com/.

Please consider spring cleaning your sacristies and storage areas for liturgical items no longer needed or in use. The *Liturgical Exchange* provides a great service within and outside the Archdiocese of Philadelphia for those looking to repurpose liturgical items for churches and chapels.

FOR THE MOST RECENT NEWSLETTER FROM THE USCCB

Individual issues of the Newsletter are posted online around the fifteenth of the month approximately three months after they have been released to subscribers.

For information on subscribing to the newsletter, visit:
https://www.usccb.org/committees/divine-worship/newsletter.

FOR PAST MONTHLY MAILINGS OF THE OFFICE FOR DIVINE WORSHIP

Visit: *http://www.odwphiladelphia.org/sacred-liturgy/monthly-mailings/.*