CATHOLIC
DIOCESE *of* RALEIGH

NORMS AND GUIDELINES FOR LENT, THE SACRED PASCHAL TRIDUUM, AND THE SEASON OF EASTER

2026

"Christ redeemed us all and gave perfect glory to God principally through paschal mystery: dying he destroyed our death and rising he restored our life. Therefore, the Easter triduum of the passion and resurrection of Christ is the culmination of the entire liturgical year. Thus, the solemnity of Easter has the same kind of preeminence in the liturgical year that Sunday has in the week" (*General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar*, 18).

NORMS FOR FASTING AND ABSTINENCE

Ash Wednesday, **February 18, 2026,** and Good Friday, **April 3, 2026**, are days of fasting and abstinence. Fridays of Lent are also days of abstinence.

Fasting is to be observed by all 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.

Abstinence is observed by all 14 years of age and older. On days of abstinence, no meat is allowed. Note that when health or ability to work would be seriously affected, Church 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 Initiation into the Church or the renewal of Baptismal Promises at Easter.

El miércoles de ceniza, **18 de febrero del 2026** y el viernes santo, **3 de abril del 2026**, son días de abstinencia y de ayuno. También deben abstenerse los viernes durante la Cuaresma.

Todas las personas a partir de los 18 años de edad y los que no hayan cumplido los 59 años de edad, deben ayunar. Se permite comer una vez durante el día de ayuno, aunque también pueden comer dos veces para mantener la energía, según la necesidad de cada individuo. Sin embargo, estas dos comidas no deben igualar a la cantidad de una comida completa. No se puede comer entre comidas, pero está permitido tomar líquido, incluyendo leche y jugos.

La abstinencia se debe cumplir desde los 14 años de edad en adelante. En los días de abstinencia, no se debe comer carne, aunque si la salud o la habilidad para cumplir su trabajo se ve seriamente afectado, la ley no lo obliga. Si tiene alguna duda sobre la práctica del ayuno o de la abstinencia, consulte al sacerdote de su parroquia.

El ayuno, la limosna, y la oración son las tres disciplinas tradicionales durante la Cuaresma. Los feligreses y los catecúmenos deben realizar estas prácticas con seriedad en espíritu de penitencia y en preparación para la Iniciación a la Iglesia o para la renovación de las Promesas Bautismales durante la Vigilia Pascual.

THE CHARACTER OF THE LENTEN SEASON, THE SACRED PASCHAL TRIDUUM, AND THE EASTER SEASON

This period of the Church's calendar is made up of 96 days – Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday and concludes on the morning of Holy Thursday; the Sacred Paschal Triduum beginning Holy Thursday evening and concluding with Evening Prayer on Easter Sunday evening; and the Great Fifty Days of Easter, which also begin on Easter Sunday and culminate at Evening Prayer on Pentecost Sunday. More than a quarter of the year is devoted to commemorating and celebrating these events, which won for us so a great a salvation.

Ash Wednesday: February 18, 2026

Ash Wednesday is not a holy day of obligation and while there is no requirement for the clergy and faithful to receive the imposition of ashes, it is rightly observed as a celebration of high importance as the entrance into the practices and disciplines of Lent.

Ashes may be distributed through **sprinkling on top of the head** or by the method of placing them in the form of **a cross on the forehead** of the individual. The formula as it appears in the Roman Missal is said to everyone who receives ashes: "***Repent, and believe in the Gospel.***" or "***Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.***" ("***Conviértete y cree en el Evangelio.***" O: "***Recuerda que eres polvo y al polvo has de volver.***")

Bishop Luis does not advise the use of any instrument in the distribution of ashes.

The blessing and distribution of ashes may take place either at a celebration of Mass or at a celebration of the Liturgy of the Word (the **Book of Blessings** provides instructions for the distribution of ashes outside of Mass nos. 1656-1678).

The blessing and distribution of ashes follow the homily. **The Penitential Act is omitted**. Ordinarily, ashes are distributed by Priests and Deacons. In parishes where there are many faithful present, however, other lay ministers ought to assist in the distribution of ashes. Ashes may be taken to the home-bound and those in nursing homes by those who regularly minister to them.

CELEBRATIONS DURING LENT

The Sundays of Lent take precedence over all Solemnities and Feasts. Solemnities occurring on these Sundays are observed on the nearest unimpeded day.

The weekdays of Lent have precedence over obligatory and optional Memorials, but the Collect of the Saint may replace the Collect of the Day at Mass. For the observances of the Saints in the Liturgy of the Hours, see "Directives on the Calendar," no. 4, in the *Ordo*.

As "the first Sunday of Lent marks the beginning of the annual Lenten observance…in the Mass of this Sunday there should be some distinctive elements which underline this important moment, e.g., **the entrance procession with litanies of the saints**" (*Paschale Solemnitatis*, #23).

Spiritual exercises which are traditionally associated with Lent ought to be encouraged such as:

- Stations of the Cross, particularly on each Friday of Lent

- A frequent use of the Liturgy of the Hours, especially the celebration of Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer with the people
- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
- Days of Recollection, Mornings/Evenings of Prayer, and/or Parish Missions

Other Lenten family/parish activities can assist in fostering a full appreciation and understanding of these primary seasons of our Church year.

THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

Since Lent is oriented towards the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation at Easter, care must be taken to maintain this central focus. It is customary that the Baptism of infants does not take place during Lent except in the case of emergency. Likewise, the reception of First Holy Communion is to be rare and only by exception during Lent, but most appropriate during Easter Time.

The *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults* was designed primarily for adults who have not been baptized, nor formally catechized in the dogmas and doctrines of Christianity. The Rite, therefore, places particular focus on the journey of the unbaptized to the waters of Baptism, the chrism of Confirmation, and to reception of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist.

This journey is one of profound transformation in the whole person who undertakes it, and in order that this profound transformation be recognized as pivotal in the lives the catechumens, the First Sunday of Lent is centered on the transition of the Catechumens into the Elect. **The Rite of Election for the Catechumens of the Diocese of Raleigh will be celebrated on February 22, 2026, at Holy Name of Jesus Cathedral at 5:00 p.m. for <u>all Deaneries of the Diocese</u>.**

The Rite of Sending for Election should be celebrated in parishes beforehand, and the names of the Catechumens should be inscribed in the Book of the Elect prior to the Rite of Election (Cf. OCIA, 106-117).

Candidates for Full Communion in the Catholic Church will celebrate the **Call to Continuing Conversion** on the Second Sunday of Lent in the parishes where they are being catechized and prepared. In addition, the **Penitential Rite** for baptized candidates preparing for the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist may be celebrated on the Second Sunday of Lent, March 1, 2026 (Cf. OCIA, 459-472).

The **Masses for the Celebration of the Scrutinies** are included in the "Ritual Masses" section of the *Roman Missal*. The ritual of the Scrutiny itself is found in the OCIA text at nos. 150-156 (First Scrutiny); nos. 164-170 (Second Scrutiny); and nos. 171-177 (Third Scrutiny). They are to be celebrated on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent whenever possible. If for pastoral reasons, the Scrutinies cannot be celebrated on these Sundays, other appropriate Lenten weekdays may be chosen. The Gospels of the Samaritan Women, the Man Born Blind, and the Resurrection of Lazarus are proclaimed at the respective celebrations of the Scrutinies.

The Scrutinies or Penitential Rites for children preparing for Initiation should be celebrated apart from those celebrated for adults. They are held in a celebration of the Word using the adult rite as a guide, with appropriate adaptations. Pastoral care should dictate the number of Scrutinies celebrated (OCIA 291-303).

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

The season of Lent "is the principal time of penance both for individual Christians and for the whole Church." (RP Appx. II). The purpose of the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance in the Lenten season is to avail the faithful of ample 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" (RP, 13).

The Sacrament of Penance, therefore, both individually and communally (with individual confession, penance, and reception of absolution), ought to be provided in all parishes of the Diocese. The faithful should be clearly and positively encouraged to receive this sacrament during Lent. Pastors should devote themselves to the ministry of reconciliation and provide sufficient time for the faithful to avail themselves of this sacrament in the parish. Schedules for the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance should be arranged in each parish and will be posted on the website of the Diocese of Raleigh.

In addition to an increased opportunity for celebrating the Sacrament of Penance in the parish, the *Rite of Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution* (Communal Penance Service) should be offered in each parish of the Deanery. Sample Communal Penance Service outlines for Lent are available from the Office of Divine Worship on the Diocesan website and in Appendix II of the *Order of Penance* book.

In communal celebrations of the sacrament, after the Liturgy of the Word and General Confession of Sins, "the penitents go to the priests designated for individual confession and confess their sins" (RP 55). At this point in the celebration the penitent simply confesses her/his sins without any preliminary statements and the minister provides suitable counsel followed by the absolution.

FUNERAL LITURGIES DURING LENT AND THE PASCHAL TRIDUUM

Good liturgical practice of the celebration of Christian funerals suggests reflecting the liturgical season in the choice of music and scripture. Lent may also be reflected through the option to use purple vestments (OCF, 39).

On Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday, a Funeral Mass may not be celebrated. If necessity warrants it on these days the body of the deceased may be brought into the Church for a *Funeral Liturgy outside Mass* using the *Order of Christian Funerals*, Part I, Chapter 4. A Mass for the deceased should be offered as soon as is convenient after Easter Sunday (OCF, 107-203).

MARRIAGE DURING THE SEASON OF LENT

Marriages are not prohibited during the season of Lent, but if a Marriage is to be celebrated during this time, "the pastor is to counsel the spouses to take into account the special nature of this period of the Church year. The celebration of Marriage on Friday of the Passion of the Lord (Good Friday) and on Holy Saturday is to be avoided altogether" (OCM, 32).

COMMUNION FOR THE SICK AND VIATICUM

The Distribution of Holy Communion outside of the Liturgy of the Sacred Triduum, except to the sick, is prohibited on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. Holy Communion may

be brought to the sick on all days except Holy Saturday. On Holy Saturday, Holy Communion may be given only as Viaticum (*RM,* "Holy Saturday," 3).

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The **Paschal Candle** remains in the baptistery during the Season of Lent particularly for funeral liturgies (Baptisms being discouraged except in cases of extreme necessity). The Paschal Candle and its stand should be removed with all other movable furnishings after the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday.

Beginning Ash Wednesday, **Prayers Over the People** are provided in the *Roman Missal*. They are either obligatory or optional, depending on the day. When used, they augment the simple blessing given at the end of Mass: after the dialogue "The Lord be with you / And with your spirit," the Deacon, or the priest himself if there is no Deacon, invites the people to "Bow down for the blessing" and then prays the Prayer over the People, to which the people respond, "Amen." Then he blesses and dismisses them as usual.

During Lent, it is not permitted to decorate the altar with **flowers**. The Fourth Sunday of Lent (*Laetare* Sunday), Solemnities, and Feasts are exceptions to this rule. On the Fourth Sunday of Lent, **rose-colored vestments** may also be used (CB, 252).

Holy Water should remain available in the fonts at the doors of the Church throughout the Season of Lent. The practice of replacing Holy Water in the fonts with sand is prohibited. Holy Water is removed from all fonts after the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday.

In the Dioceses of the United States, the practice of **covering images throughout the church** on the Fifth Sunday of Lent may be observed. Crosses remain covered until Good Friday, unveiled either for the purpose of veneration during the Celebration of the Passion of the Lord or, in the case of all other crosses, at the close of that liturgy. Other images remain covered until the beginning of the Easter Vigil.

Crosses and crucifixes in the church are to be removed, if possible, after the stripping of the altar on Holy Thursday. If they cannot be removed, they are to be veiled (*RM,* "Thursday of the Lord's Supper," 41).

Musical instruments may ordinarily be played only to give necessary support to singing. "Those preparing liturgical celebrations should attend to the purpose rather than the strict letter of this law as certain instrumental pieces, for example, may in the local situation indeed foster the spirit of the Lenten season" (*Ordo* 2026, p. 61).

From Ash Wednesday until the Easter Vigil, the ***Alleluia*** is omitted in all celebrations, even on Solemnities and Feasts.

Encouragement is to be given to pray for the Elect of the Church and for the continued conversion of all its faithful with an appropriate intention included each week in the Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful), especially in those parishes which have Elect and Candidates preparing for the Easter Sacraments.

PARTICULAR LITURGIES DURING
LENT, THE PASCHAL TRIDUUM, AND EASTER TIME

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord: March 29, 2026

On this day, the Church remembers Christ's entrance into Jerusalem to accomplish the Paschal Mystery. Three options are given in the Roman Missal for the beginning of the Sacred Liturgy on this day: the Procession, the Solemn Entrance, and the Simple Entrance. The Solemn Entrance, **but not the Procession**, may be repeated before other Masses that are usually celebrated with a large gathering of the faithful. Masses beginning with either the Procession or the Solemn Entrance **omit the Penitential Act**.

The Passion proclaimed on this day is essential to the Sacred Liturgy and cannot be omitted. The narrative of the Lord's Passion is read without candles or incense, without greeting or signing of the Book of the Gospels. It is read by a Deacon, or when there is no Deacon, by a Priest. It may also be read by readers, with the part of Christ reserved to the Priest. Care should be taken that the Proclamation of the Passion does not become a reenactment or historical drama. For the spiritual good of the faithful the Passion should be proclaimed in its entirety. The First and Second Readings and the Responsorial Psalm should not be omitted.

The Chrism Mass: March 31, 2026 – 10:30 a.m.

The Chrism Mass will be celebrated by Most Rev. Luis R. Zarama, Bishop of Raleigh, on **Tuesday, March 31, 2026, at Holy Name of Jesus Cathedral, Raleigh, at 10:30 a.m.**; the Procession will begin at 10:15 a.m.

No other liturgies should be scheduled in the Diocese at this time. Pastors and Pastoral Administrators are directed to invite their parishioners to this celebration of the Diocesan Church.

During this important preparatory liturgy for the Paschal Triduum, the Bishop blesses the Oil of Catechumens, the Oil of the Sick, and consecrates the Sacred Chrism.

This liturgy, which the Bishop concelebrates with his presbyterate, should be, as it were, a manifestation of the priests' communion with their Bishop. Accordingly, it is desirable that, to the extent possible, all priests participate in it. To signify the unity of the presbyterate of the diocese, the priests who concelebrate with the Bishop should be form different regions of the diocese (Cf. *RM*, "The Chrism Mass," 4).

At this liturgy, priests are invited to renew their priestly promises before the Bishop following the Homily, which promises are then affirmed by the gathered assembly of the faithful in the name of all the faithful of the Diocese of Raleigh.

The Holy Oils blessed at the Chrism Mass are distributed to representatives of the parishes of the Diocese after the Prayer after Communion at this liturgy.

It is appropriate that the Holy Oils and Sacred Chrism blessed and consecrated at the Chrism Mass be received in the parish. The reception of the Holy Oils and the Sacred Chrism may take place either before the celebration of the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper or at another time

that seems more appropriate. The proper form of this optional rite for the presentation of the Holy Oils and Sacred Chrism is available through the USCCB website: http://usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/triduum/order-for-the-reception-of-the-holy-oils.cfm.

THE SACRED PASCHAL TRIDUUM

The Sacred Paschal Triduum begins with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday and continues until Evening Prayer on Easter Sunday. During this sacred time, In the Sacred Triduum, "the Church solemnly celebrates the greatest mysteries of our redemption, keeping by means of special celebrations the memorial of her Lord, crucified, buried, and risen" (*RM*, "The Sacred Paschal Triduum," 1). Special care should be taken to encourage the faithful to participate in all three days of the Triduum.

Thursday of the Lord's Supper (Holy Thursday): April 2, 2026

The Liturgy of the Hours, particularly Morning Prayer, is encouraged among the faithful in place of a regularly scheduled morning Mass on this day. **Evening Prayer is not celebrated by those who attend the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper.**

Careful attention should be given to what is celebrated in this Mass: the institution of the Eucharist and the Mandatum, the Lord's command to love through the service of others.

Please note that on Holy Thursday the only Mass permitted is the Mass of the Lord's Supper. In the case of a genuine necessity, the Bishop may permit a second evening Mass of the Lord's Supper or even, in case of genuine necessity, a Mass in the morning for those who are unable to participate in the evening Mass. **Permission for these Masses must be obtained through the Office of the Bishop. Any such request must be sent to the Office of the Bishop prior to March 20, 2026.**

It is strongly encouraged that both species of the Body and Blood of Christ be offered to the faithful at this liturgy to signify the fullness of the Eucharistic Mystery given to us by our Lord.

At the beginning of the Mass of the Lord's Supper, the tabernacle should be entirely empty, but enough hosts should be consecrated in this Mass to provide for Holy Communion for the faithful on this and the following day.

The Washing of Feet ritual (*Mandatum*) is optional; however, parishes are strongly encouraged to include the ritual in the celebration of the Mass of the Lord's Supper. Traditionally, twelve people are invited to have their feet washed, though there is no exact requirement. Those whose feet are to be washed should represent a cross-section of the parish, as decreed in *In Missa in Cena Domini* (Jan. 6, 2016). As the instruction now states, "those chosen from among the People of God," a cross-section of the parish community should be selected to represent the "variety and unity of every part of the People of God." Pastors and pastoral administrators may accordingly select males and females of various ages and states of life for participation in this Rite. Those chosen for this rite must already have received the Sacrament of Baptism (*Code of Canon Law,* can. 204 §1).

Following the Prayer after Communion, the Holy Eucharist is transferred to an Altar or Place of Repose. This may be the Tabernacle regularly used for reservation if it is in a separate Chapel or an area removed from the Sanctuary. The Altar or Place of Repose should be decorated simply. **The Blessed Sacrament is not to be exposed in a Monstrance.** "The faithful are invited to continue adoration before the Blessed Sacrament for a suitable length of time during the night, according to local circumstances, but after midnight the adoration should take place without solemnity" (*RM*, "Mass of the Lord's Supper," 43). **It is not permitted to reserve the Precious Blood for adoration on Holy Thursday or for distribution on Good Friday** (*CN*, 30).

At an appropriate time after Mass, the Altar is stripped, and whenever possible the crosses and crucifixes in the Church are removed. Any crosses that remain should be covered. Votive candles should not be lit before the images of saints (*CL*, 57). Holy water should be removed from all fonts. They are refilled with the Easter water blessed at the Easter Vigil. Likewise, the Paschal Candle and its stand should be removed.

If the celebration of the Passion of the Lord on the following day does not take place in the same church, Mass is concluded in the usual way without a procession or reposition. The Blessed Sacrament is placed in the tabernacle.

Friday of the Passion of the Lord (Good Friday): April 3, 2026

The order for the Solemn Celebration of the Lord's Passion (the Liturgy of the Word, the Solemn Intercessions, the Adoration of the Holy Cross, and Holy Communion) stems from an ancient tradition of the Church and should be observed faithfully.

The Paschal Fast should be kept from Friday of the Lord's Passion and, when appropriate, prolonged also through Holy Saturday as a way of coming, with spirit uplifted, to the joys of the Lord's Resurrection (*General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar,* 20). The Liturgy of the Hours, particularly Morning Prayer, is encouraged among the faithful.

The celebration of the Lord's Passion **should take place at or about 3:00pm**. If pastoral need dictates, this celebration may take place later in the day. This liturgy is ideally celebrated only once for each parish community. Nonetheless, if the size or nature of the parish community indicates a pastoral need for an additional celebration, the service may be repeated later. It may not, however, be celebrated in the absence of a priest.

The Readings are to be proclaimed in their entirety. The Passion is to be read in the prescribed way previously outlined for Palm Sunday.

The Solemn Intercessions are to follow the form and text as found in the Roman Missal. Every encouragement is given to the intercessions being sung. The faithful may remain standing or kneeling throughout the entire time of the prayers, or if desired, the invitations "Let us kneel – Let us stand" may be used as noted in the *Roman Missal*.

During the Adoration of the Cross, **only one cross** is to be used for adoration. If, because of the large number of people, it is not possible for all to approach individually, the priest, after some have adored, takes the cross and, standing in the middle of the sanctuary, invites the faithful gathered to adore the Holy Cross and elevates it for a short time for the faithful to adore in silence. (*RM,* "Good Friday," 19)

While it is permissible to adore a Cross with a corpus upon it, from ancient tradition it has been the custom of the Church to adore "the wood" of the Cross without the body of Christ. Thus, a Cross and not a Crucifix is preferred for this part of the liturgy. Adoration may take any number of forms, from bowing or genuflecting before the Cross to touching or kissing it.

When adoration has been concluded, the Cross is placed at the altar with two to four candles around it.

The distribution of Holy Communion follows, at the conclusion of which the Ciborium with the Blessed Sacrament is removed to a place out of the view of the faithful – it should not be placed in the Tabernacle in the church.

After the Dismissal, the ministers genuflect to the Cross and depart in silence.

Following the celebration, the altar is stripped but the Cross and candles remain so that the faithful may venerate it and spend time in adoration.

Evening Prayer is not celebrated by those who have participated in the Solemn Celebration of the Lord's Passion.

Holy Saturday: April 4, 2026

The Liturgy of the Hours, particularly Morning Prayer, is encouraged among the faithful. **Evening Prayer is celebrated this day before the beginning of the Easter Vigil**.

The celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage is not permitted, nor is the celebration of other sacraments, except those of Penance and Anointing of the Sick (*RM,* "Good Friday," 1).

Easter Sunday of the Lord's Resurrection – The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night

"Today is the day of Easter joy! May the Risen Lord breathe on our minds and open our eyes that we may know him in the breaking of the bread and follow him in his risen life."

The Mass of the Vigil is celebrated through four parts: the *Lucernarium* and Easter Proclamation; the Liturgy of the Word; the Baptismal Liturgy; and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The Vigil is to be celebrated in its entirety. It is encouraged that Communion be offered under both species.

The entire celebration of the Vigil must take place at night: that is, it should begin after nightfall. The Easter Vigil should begin at a time that allows for the Easter Fire to break the darkness of night. This rule is to be taken according to its strictest sense. On Saturday, April 4, 2026, sunset in Raleigh will be at 7:37 pm EDT and evening nautical twilight commences at 8:04 pm EDT. Thus, **for parishes in the Diocese of Raleigh, the Easter (Paschal) Vigil should not begin before 8:30 p.m. Due to the lateness of the hour, however, and so as not to burden the faithful who wish to celebrate the Vigil in its fullness**, **the beginning of the Easter Vigil may be moved to 8:00 p.m. at the discretion of the Pastor.**

Note that the Easter Vigil is **not to be celebrated at the time of day that the anticipated Sunday Mass on Saturday ordinarily takes place**. There is to be only one celebration of the Vigil.

Questions on scheduling should be directed to the Office of Divine Worship (or, if vacant, the Office of the Vicar General).

The Paschal Candle must be made of wax, not be artificial, be renewed each year, be only one in number, and be of sufficient size, so that it may evoke the truth that Christ is the light of the world (CL, 82). The Paschal Candle is lit for all liturgies during the Easter Season (CB, 372).

The preparation rites of the Paschal Candle are not optional and must be included in the celebration.

To accommodate parishes that have mission churches where the Vigil is not celebrated, the Secretariat of the Committee on Divine Worship of the USCCB suggests that Paschal Candles prepared beforehand could be present at the church where the Vigil is celebrated and blessed alongside the principal Paschal Candle. As the candles are lit throughout the church, the Candle could be lit and held by a representative of the mission church who will take it to the church for Mass on Easter Sunday. It should be carried lit in the Entrance Procession of the first Mass at each church and put in a place in the sanctuary.

The Easter Proclamation (*Exsultet*) is sung by the Deacon, in the absence of a deacon, by the Priest-Presider or another concelebrating priest, or if necessary, a lay cantor.

For the Easter Vigil, "the mother of all Vigils," nine readings are provided – seven from the Old Testament, and two from the New Testament – all of which should be read whenever this can be done, so that the character of the Vigil, which demands an extended period of time, may be preserved.

The reading of the Word of God is a fundamental part of the Easter Vigil; however, for serious pastoral considerations, fewer readings may be chosen. There should be at least three readings from the Old Testament, taken from the Law and the Prophets. **The reading from Exodus with its canticle <u>must never be omitted</u>**.

Except for the reading from Exodus and its Canticle, any of the Responsorial Psalms may be replaced by a period of sacred silence.

The parts unique to the Vigil which should always be sung are the acclamations during the Procession with the Paschal Candle, the Easter Proclamation, the responsorial *Alleluia* after the Epistle, the Litany of the Saints, and the acclamation after the Blessing of the Easter Water.

In addition to Eucharistic Acclamations which are ordinarily sung, the *Gloria* should be sung, rather than merely recited, because of the festive nature of the Vigil.

The priest presider solemnly intones the *Alleluia* three times raising his voice a step each time before the Gospel. If necessary, the psalmist intones the Alleluia in the same manner.

The Sacraments of Initiation, particularly for the Church's Elect, should be celebrated according to the ritual prescribed in the liturgical texts: for celebrations with only the Elect, these begin at *OCIA* 218; for combined rites with Candidates, these begin at *OCIA*, 567.

"Pastoral considerations may suggest that along with the celebration of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation of adults, the Easter Vigil should include the Rite of Reception into the full communion

of the Catholic Church of those already validly baptized, and even the Baptism of children. But such a decision must be guided by the theological and pastoral directives proper to each rite." In any case, "the celebration itself must reflect the (different) status of candidates for Reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church: such candidates have already been incorporated into Christ in baptism and anything that would equate them with catechumens is to be absolutely avoided" (*OCIA*, 562 and 565).

Adults (and children of catechetical age) receiving the Sacrament of Baptism or being brought into full communion in the Church during the Easter Vigil should be confirmed by the Priest who administers Baptism (*OCIA,* 588).

In the celebration of baptism for children of catechetical age, the rite foresees that these children are to be confirmed by the priest who administers baptism (*OCIA*, 323; see also *Code of Canon Law*, 883§2). Nevertheless, when "for some special reason, the celebration of Confirmation is separated from Baptism," then after the baptism, the celebrant anoints the child with chrism on the crown of the head as in the Rite of Baptism of Children (*OCIA,* 319).

*Easter Sunday of the Lord's Resurrection –**Mass during the Day: April 5, 2026***

The holy water fonts at the entrance to the church should be filled with the Easter Water blessed at the Easter Vigil.

On Easter Sunday (*Victimae paschali laudes*) and Pentecost Sunday (*Veni Sancte Spiritus*), the Sequence is required and is **sung** before the *Alleluia* (STTL, 165). The Sequence may be sung by the full assembly together or alternating between the congregation and cantor/choir, or by the choir or cantor alone (STTL, 166).

The **Double Alleluia** is added to the Dismissal Rite for Masses and celebrations of the Liturgy of the Hours during the Octave of Easter and on Pentecost Sunday (CB, 373).

At all Masses with a congregation on Easter Sunday, the **Renewal of Baptismal Promises** and its accompanying **Rite of Sprinkling of Water** may take place after the Homily and replaces the Creed (*RM*, "Mass during the Day," 72).

THE EASTER SEASON

The fifty days from Easter Sunday (April 5, 2026) to Pentecost (May 24, 2026) are to be celebrated with a particular joy and exultation at the gift of the Resurrection. They are celebrated in joyful exultation as one feast day, or better, as "one great Sunday." These above all others are the days for the singing of the *Alleluia* (*CB,* 371).

The first eight days of the Easter Season are the Octave of Easter and are celebrated as Solemnities of the Lord and as Easter Day (*CB,* 373).

During the Easter Season the **Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling of Water** may replace the Penitential Act (GIRM, Appendix II).

Throughout the Easter season the Neophytes, those who were baptized at the Easter Vigil, may be

assigned their own special place among the faithful. Intercession should be made in the Eucharistic Prayer for the newly baptized during the Easter Octave.

It is fitting that infant baptisms are celebrated on any Sunday of the Easter Season, including Pentecost Sunday. It is also appropriate that children receive First Communion on one or another of the Sundays of Easter.

In light of the inherent connection of the Sacraments of Initiation with the Easter Season and in observance of canon 884 §1, Bishop Luis grants to priests properly appointed as Pastors and Parochial Vicars for service in the Diocese of Raleigh, the special faculty to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation to adult Catholics [persons who are 18 years or older who are previously baptized in the Catholic Church but not yet confirmed] during the sacred season of Easter, beginning with the Easter Vigil and extending through the celebration of Pentecost *(CIC* canons 97 §1, 882,884 §1, 885 §§1-2). This faculty also extends to those who have equal rights with the pastor, including administrators and priest campus ministers.

During this season, there is no need to request faculties for such celebrations as is the case the rest of the year.

The Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord: May 17, 2026

In the Ecclesiastical Province of Atlanta, the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord has been transferred to Sunday and will be celebrated on **Sunday, May 17, 2026**, suppressing the Seventh Sunday of Easter.

The Solemnity of Pentecost: May 24, 2026

Pentecost has its own Vigil Mass, which is to be celebrated on Saturday evening (May 23, 2026). This may be in the Simple Form or, optionally, an Extended Form. There is no Sequence in either form of the Pentecost Vigil. The Sequence of Pentecost is sung at all Masses on Sunday.

The Simple Form of the Pentecost Vigil follows the plan of a regular Sunday Mass, but **without the Pentecost Sequence** that will be sung on Sunday.

For the Extended Vigil, after the Greeting and the Penitential Act, the priest celebrant prays the prayer, "Grant, we pray, almighty God, that the splendor…" (as in the Vigil Mass), then gives the instruction to the people found in "At the Vigil Mass: Extended Form" n.3. Four Readings are proclaimed with their psalms and prayers, then the Gloria is sung. At the conclusion of the *Gloria*, the Collect ("Almighty, ever-living God") is prayed, and the Mass continues with the Second Reading prescribed in the Lectionary (Romans 8: 22-27) and the Gospel prescribed for the Mass. After the Homily, the Mass continues in the usual way.

After Pentecost, the Paschal Candle may be returned to a less prominent place but always placed near the Baptismal Font.

REFERENCE ABBREVIATIONS

CB – Ceremonial of Bishops; CN – Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion; CL – Circular Letter concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts (Congregation for Divine Worship, 1988);GIRM – General Instruction of the Roman Missal; OCM – Order of Celebrating Matrimony; OCF – Order of Christian Funerals; OCIA – Order of Christian Initiation of Adults; RM: Roman Missal; RP – Rite of Penance; STTL – Sing to the Lord.

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Most Reverend Luis Rafael Zarama
Bishop, Diocese of Raleigh