



## Lent and Easter - A Pastoral Guide

In addition to the information below, check the USCCB Committee on the Liturgy website. The Bishop's Committee on the Liturgy offers additional Lent resources for your consideration. You can go directly to the information by [clicking here](#).

### Keeping the Spirit of Lent

The Lenten season has a dual character: to prepare catechumens **and** the faithful to celebrate the paschal mystery. Catechumens will focus on the rite of election, the scrutinies, and the other rites and catechesis that will prepare them for the sacraments of Christian initiation. The faithful, ever more attentive to the word of God and prayer, and supportive of the catechumens and candidates, prepare themselves by penance for the renewal of their baptismal promises (*Ceremonial of Bishops*, no. 249). Care should be taken to preserve the spirit or tone of Lent.

**Eucharistic Prayers.** The Eucharistic Prayers of Reconciliation are most appropriate during Lent. The current edition of the *Sacramentary* includes these Eucharistic Prayers.

**Liturgical Music.** The use of musical instruments is allowed only to support the singing (*Ceremonial of Bishops*, no. 252). The exceptions to this rule are on the fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday), and on solemnities and feasts. The *Gloria* is not sung or recited during Lent until Holy Thursday, except for the solemnities and feasts. The *Alleluia* is not used until the Easter Vigil. Lent might also be highlighted by greater use of silence during the liturgy.

### ENVIRONMENT & ART

**Flowers:** During Lent, the altar and sanctuary are not to be decorated with flowers (*Ceremonial of Bishops*, no. 252). The exceptions to this rule are on the fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday), and on solemnities and feasts.

**Veiling crosses:** After the Holy Thursday liturgy, any cross that cannot be removed from sight should be covered with a red or violet cloth in preparation for the veneration of the cross on Good Friday. *Roman Missal 2002* allows (but does not require) the veiling of crosses and images beginning after Masses on the Saturday of the Fourth Week of Lent.

**Special crosses:** Planners ought to review the practice of placing a special Good Friday cross in the church throughout Lent. The Lenten season, after all, is **not** a forty-day meditation solely on the Lord's cross and passion.

**Baptismal fonts:** The same is true for filling baptistry and holy water fonts with sand. Lent is **not** a period where blessed water and the paschal mystery it signifies are any less real or relevant than at other times of the year. Indeed, one could argue the opposite, since preparation for baptism, and therefore a deep baptismal spirituality, is a fundamental focus of the Lenten season.

### CELEBRATIONS OF THE SACRAMENTS DURING LENT

**Sacraments of Initiation:** Because Lent in its rituals, scriptures, history, and place in parish life is oriented toward the celebration of the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil, the celebration of baptism is somewhat incongruous during Lent itself. Lent is simply not the proper context for celebrating the Easter sacraments of initiation. It is certainly inappropriate to celebrate adult baptism during Lent, except, of course, in danger of death. The baptism of infants is also far more fitting on Easter Sunday and during the Easter season. Regarding future planning, the sacrament of Confirmation — also an Easter sacrament of initiation — ought to be celebrated during the Easter season, or at any time of the year other than Lent.

**Rite of Penance:** The celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation during Lent should be clearly and positively encouraged, and so it is customary that confession schedules are expanded in preparation for Easter. The hours scheduled by any parish should be extensive enough so that an unreasonable burden does not fall on neighboring parishes. It is suggested that parishes, within their respective clusters, arrange their schedules cooperatively so that all in the area are served adequately and with reasonable convenience.

It is appropriate for the sacrament of reconciliation to be celebrated during Lent in a more solemn form, as described in the *Rite of Penance*. Additionally, **the only ordinary way for the faithful to reconcile themselves with God and the Church is through individual, integral confession and absolution** (*Rite of Penance*, no. 31).

Ideally, the faithful will have celebrated the sacrament of reconciliation **before the Triduum begins**. Proper catechesis should be provided to all parishioners about the liturgical reasons for this. All in the faith community should know that Lent is the time for celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation, and that Lent ends on Holy Thursday afternoon. Parish confession schedules ought to reflect our liturgical beliefs, giving reasonable opportunity for receiving the sacrament during Lent. However, it is a reality that some people may look for the opportunity to celebrate reconciliation in the final days before Easter.

**Rite of Marriage:** If marriages are celebrated during Lent, couples are to be reminded that wedding plans must respect the nature of the liturgical season. Please refer to the sections on Liturgical Music and Environment & Art, above.

**Lent and RCIA.** The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*, with its catechumenate period and its various stages and rituals, is mandated for every parish of the Archdiocese. Liturgical planners and ministers should become thoroughly familiar with the *RCIA*, so that Lent and the Triduum may be celebrated as fully and richly as possible. All parishes with catechumens are to participate in the **Rite of Election**.

These celebrations occur at the beginning of the Lenten season on the first Sunday of Lent. **This year [March 5, 2006] at Our Lady of Guadalupe gathered with Archbishop Schwietz**, the faithful and the elect mark the beginning of the period of final, more intense preparation for the sacraments of initiation, during which the elect will be encouraged to follow Christ with greater generosity, and conform themselves more fully to the way of the Gospel. When there are catechumens present, the scrutinies are to be celebrated on the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent. Readings are from cycle A of the *Lectionary*. See *RCIA* no. 146. Also, the proper ritual prayers and intercessions are found in the *Sacramentary*.

Information on particular days and celebrations follow.

## Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is the Church's solemn call to keep the season of Lent. We accept this call, united with the catechumens, and recalling our own baptism as we enter this special time of prayer and penitential practice.

Ashes are blessed and distributed after the homily of the Mass. When there is genuine pastoral need, deacons, special ministers of Communion, or other lay persons may be designated to help distribute the ashes. The words "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel" are the recommended formula for placing the ashes, since this is what Jesus preached as he began his public ministry.

## The Chrism Mass

This year, the Chrism Mass will be celebrated on Wednesday, **April 5, 2006 at 7:00 pm**, at Holy Family Cathedral. At this liturgy the Oil of the Sick, Oil of Catechumens, and the Sacred Chrism are blessed by the Archbishop and distributed for use in all our parishes and faith communities.

## Palm Sunday of the Passion

**Introductory Rites.** The Church today "celebrates Christ's entrance into Jerusalem to accomplish his paschal mystery" (*Sacramentary*). The memorial of this event is to be included in every Mass. The *Sacramentary* provides three forms for this memorial of the Lord's entrance, so these rites and their rubrics should be studied carefully as ministers, planners and musicians prepare the liturgy. Although the Procession should take place only once (before the principal Mass), the Solemn Entrance may be used before the principal Mass if the Procession cannot be held. The prayers for the blessing of the palms are used whenever the Procession or the Solemn Entrance is celebrated; the penitential rite of the Mass is then omitted.

**Reading the Passion.** Readers and pastoral musicians are encouraged to study the rubrics for the proclamation of the Passion. There is a Gospel Acclamation as usual, and the deacon receives the blessing as usual (lay readers do not receive a blessing). Omitted are candles and incense, the greeting and response ("The Lord be with you..."), the making of the sign of the cross on the book, forehead, lips, and breast, and the people's response ("Glory to you, Lord").

Since it is a reading from the Gospel, the appropriate posture for the assembly during the reading of the Passion is standing. Some priests direct the assembly to sit during this time, but such an invitation to “get comfortable” for the Passion narrative is really needless, and seems incongruous with the attitude the liturgy is meant to convey, which is that of union with Christ in his suffering and death. For two thousand years, people have been quite willing to tolerate any discomfort with standing on the rare occasions when the Lord’s Passion is proclaimed.

The deacon and/or priest may be assisted by lectors in the reading of the Passion on Palm Sunday and Good Friday. As always, but especially on these days, the lectors chosen for this should be well-trained and highly proficient in the proclamation of the Word.

There is great difficulty in reading the Passion with various roles given to several readers, since the Passion accounts were never written to be scripts for a passion play. If there is to be more than one reader, the text could be divided according to scenes, rather than according to characters. Also, the proclamation of the scriptures was never meant to be a read-along (i.e., dividing the Passion into roles shared by the congregation). This practice has been encouraged by missalette publishers, not by the liturgical books. Congregations therefore ought to set aside their missalettes, give up their “crowd” lines, and listen to the Passion as proclaimed, not read.

## The Sacred Triduum

The rites for Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil are to be used in the form in which they are presented in the *Sacramentary* and *Lectionary*. These are the Church’s most sacred rites, and as the Church’s ministers, we owe it to our people to celebrate these rites exactly as they have been handed down to us.

These days — from Thursday evening through Sunday afternoon — are to be a time apart: “The Easter Triduum of the passion and resurrection of Christ is thus the culmination of the entire liturgical year” (*General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar*, no. 18). As far as possible, all preparation should be done beforehand so that for all presiders, liturgical ministers, musicians, and sacristans these may be days of peace, prayer, and vigil. Those responsible for liturgy should see to it that the liturgies of these days are characterized by care and dignity, by simplicity, and by that deep joy which is announced in the entrance song of Holy Thursday: “We should glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, for he is our salvation, our life and our resurrection.”

**Those who carry out the various ministries in these liturgies should be selected because of excellence in their ministry.**

The very heart of the Triduum is the Easter Vigil, for there the fasting, prayer, and scripture reading culminate in the celebration of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. Planners should therefore give first attention to the liturgy of the Easter Vigil, then to the liturgical services of Holy Thursday and Good Friday. Other devotional services, e.g., Stations of the Cross, rosaries, etc., should in no way detract from the preparation of music and liturgy for the rites of Lent, the Triduum, and Eastertime.

**Funerals during Triduum.** A funeral Mass may **not** be celebrated on Holy Thursday (even before the celebration of the Mass of the Lord’s Supper), Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday. If needed on these days, the body of the deceased may be brought to the church for the rite of final commendation, including the incensation and blessing of the body with holy water. Other appropriate prayers may also be added. The funeral Mass for the deceased should be celebrated as soon as convenient after Easter Sunday. At this funeral liturgy, the final commendation would be omitted.

**Marriages during Triduum.** The Rite of Marriage **may not** be celebrated on Good Friday or Holy Saturday.

## Holy Thursday

**Number of Masses.** The Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper should be celebrated at the most suitable evening hour. There may be a liturgy on Thursday morning only “for those who are in no way able to take part in the evening Mass.” This would discourage school Masses, but it would be appropriate for children to take part in other services marking the end of Lent and the approach of the Triduum. Thus, the ideal is a single Holy Thursday Mass in a parish, and only the inability of the space to accommodate those who wish to attend should suggest the possibility of a second Mass. In no way should the scheduling of a second liturgy cause either liturgy to be rushed. The private celebration of any Mass is strictly forbidden.

**Empty Tabernacle.** The tabernacle should be empty **before** the liturgy begins. Enough bread should be consecrated at this Mass for Holy Communion today and tomorrow. Consecrated wine is not to be reserved for distribution on Good Friday. Though Holy Communion may be brought to the sick today, Holy Communion may be distributed at the church itself only within the Mass.

**Parts of the Mass.** The custom of receiving the newly blessed oils can be incorporated into the Mass of the Lord's Supper. In 1989, the Vatican confirmed the decision of the U.S. bishops to include this in future editions of the *Sacramentary*. For a sample resource of how to adapt for this print #20 Chrism Mass section of How Catholics Worship from the Archdiocesan website.

The washing of feet (Mandatum) is encouraged in all parishes. This rite should be characterized by its simplicity, allowing the beautiful gesture of service to speak to all of ministry in the church. The Mandatum itself is a powerful sign of our love and commitment to one another and of the nature of that commitment. We must resist the temptation to replace the Mandatum with something "more appropriate" or "more relevant," remembering that Peter, too, thought that the washing of feet was inappropriate for the Last Supper liturgy. The group whose feet are washed should represent a cross-section of the local community. The number is traditionally twelve, though there is no exact requirement. The presider should wash the feet. If he needs assistance, he may turn to other leaders of the community, such as deacons and parish staff members. However, he should not ordinarily turn to parish volunteers to wash the feet of other parish volunteers.

Other rites and statements of commitment are not appropriate at the liturgy of Holy Thursday, for they would not find support from either the rites or from the scriptures. Rituals for the commissioning of extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, parish officers, or even renewal of priestly vows, are best celebrated on the feast of the patron of the parish, on the parish anniversary, or at some other time.

The *Sacramentary* instructs that the collection of gifts and money today be for the poor.

As noted above, Holy Communion under both kinds is the norm for the archdiocese. This takes on even greater meaning on this day, and thus some additional care in planning will add greater richness to the meaning of this celebration. For example, using the parish's best vessels would be most appropriate.

Following the Prayer after Communion, the Holy Eucharist is transferred to the place of reposition. This may be the regular tabernacle if it is in an area removed from the sanctuary. The Blessed Sacrament is never to be reserved in a monstrance during this time. The rite for this procession is described in the *Sacramentary*.

After the transfer of the Holy Eucharist, the altar is stripped privately, and any crosses are removed or covered with a red or purple veil. Lamps should **not** be lit before images of saints. Holy water is removed from all fonts, to be refilled with water blessed at the Easter Vigil. They should **not** be filled with sand.

"The faithful should be encouraged to continue adoration before the Blessed Sacrament for a suitable period of time during the night, according to local circumstances, but there should be no solemn adoration after midnight" (*Sacramentary*). In fact, the nature of the Triduum before the Easter Vigil is that of prayer and watching and anticipation. Fasting is one expression of this. Another is private and communal prayer. Thus, on Thursday night, even after the hours of formal adoration, the faithful might be encouraged to come at any and all hours to the church to watch and pray between Thursday night and the Easter Vigil.

**Passover Seder.** Parish liturgy planners should seriously evaluate the custom of celebrating the Jewish Seder meal within the context of Holy Week. We must recognize, as Christians, that the Eucharist is our holy ritual meal, and that we should refrain from appropriating the Jewish Passover Seder, which we cannot, in full conformity with our faith, celebrate without major and likely inadmissible adaptation. Healthy ecumenical and interfaith relations require respect for the religious heritage of others and the integrity of their rituals. Roman Catholics, traditionally sensitive to any perceived abuse of their own sacred rites and symbols, should surely understand this. Likewise, we should **not** appropriate the Passover Seder and adapt it for our own purposes.

## Good Friday

The Good Friday liturgy is a part of the Triduum, a unitive feast celebrated over three days; it is not just an elaborate "Communion service." The Good Friday liturgy may never be abandoned, reordered, or replaced by other rites or services, including ecumenical services.

Because Good Friday is part of the one feast called the Triduum, the pastor of the community, or the priest responsible for sacramental care, is the presider. A deacon or other minister presides only when a priest is not available. The liturgy with its Communion Rite should never give the appearance of a concelebration.

**Liturgy of the Hours.** It is recommended that there be a communal celebration of the Office of Readings and Morning Prayer on both Good Friday and Holy Saturday.

**Celebration of the Lord's Passion.** The celebration of the Lord's Passion should take place about 3pm, but for pastoral reasons may be at a later hour, or as early as 12 noon. In any case, the celebration should conclude by 9pm. The service may be repeated only when the number wishing to attend would be too large for the church.

The use of the reproaches (“My people, what have I done to you...”) is discouraged. Alternative texts to go with the traditional music have been made available by the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB). Other texts and hymns (for example, “Sing, my tongue, the song of triumph”) may also be used.

See the guidelines for the reading of the Passion in the section on Passion Sunday, above.

Although the *Sacramentary* says that “a brief homily may be given,” a letter from the Congregation for Divine Worship says that there **should** be a homily, followed by some silent meditation. A poorly prepared homily, or even skipping the homily as a “favor” to everyone, would represent a form of condescension to the people who have gathered to celebrate the Lord’s dying and rising.

**Veneration of the cross.** The ritual speaks of the veneration of the cross, not necessarily a crucifix. Wood is the operative sign for the veneration, not a figure or other embellishments that might be attached to the cross. The image of the dead and defeated Lord can narrow our focus to one isolated moment in the paschal mystery, whereas the cross (more precisely the wood of the cross) can better suggest the tree of life, whose power is present now, and transcends any particular moment in human history.

**The *Ceremonial of Bishops* directs that only one cross should be used in the veneration.**

During the veneration, music planners should avoid selections that offer facile sentiment, as the spirit of the ritual of veneration has no place for this type of music or song. Therefore, “The Old Rugged Cross” is unsuitable, as well as some other pieces that seem to have become standard fare for the veneration of the cross in the United States. After the veneration, the cross is positioned near the altar and four candles are placed near it. The cross will remain there and the candles will remain lit for a period of time following the service to allow the faithful to spend some additional time in prayer before the cross.

**Communion.** Holy Communion is distributed only within the liturgy of the Lord’s Passion, but may be taken to the sick at any time this day.

**After Communion.** After the Blessed Sacrament has been returned to its place of reservation, the presider says the Prayer Over the People from the *Sacramentary*. Then, all depart in silence. As mentioned above, the cross (with lighted candles) remains available for private prayer for a period of time. The altar is stripped at a convenient time.

## Holy Saturday

Holy Communion may be given on this day only as Viaticum. Ordinary Communion visits to the sick should be made earlier in the week and on Easter. Communion visits are not permitted on this day, nor are Masses, even funeral Masses. The absence of these liturgical celebrations is in keeping with the nature and mood of this day.

Rites for the preparation of the elect for initiation are celebrated this day, as described in the *RCIA*. Since these rites are the prayer of the Church, and not private celebrations, they ought to be included in the published Holy Week schedules, with everyone in the parish community invited. The pastor or priest responsible for the sacramental care of the community is the presider.

## The Easter Vigil

The tabernacle is **empty** for the Easter Vigil. All bread that will be used for Holy Communion is to be consecrated at the Vigil, offering us the model of what should happen at every celebration of the Eucharist throughout the year.

**Time of celebration.** “The entire celebration of the Easter Vigil takes place at night. It should not begin before nightfall; it should end before daybreak on Sunday” (*Sacramentary*). The *Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts*, issued by the Vatican in 1988, is even stronger by insisting that **the Easter**

**Vigil must start only after it is dark.** This rule is to be taken according to its strictest sense. Reprehensible are those abuses and practices which have crept into many places in violation of this ruling, whereby the Easter Vigil is celebrated at the time of day that it is customary to celebrate anticipated Sunday Masses.

The Bishops’ Committee on Liturgy (BCL) *Newsletter*, March 2001, states the Easter Vigil “is to take place in darkness... that is, after the time in the evening when daylight is last visible. This time is roughly equivalent to [the end of] **astronomical twilight** as defined by the Naval Observatory. The time after which ‘the sun does not contribute to sky illumination.’” However, it has been observed locally that true darkness seems to come much earlier than this computation provides, particularly here in Alaska. Thus, each pastor / pastoral director needs to make the appropriate determination for his parish.

**Sunset occurs on Saturday, April 4, 2006 at 8:22 with civil twilight ending at 8:51.**

Pastors / Parish Directors may wish to give consideration to establishing a fixed time for the Easter Vigil to be used **every** year, in which case an appropriate starting time would reflect an Easter Vigil occurring in mid-April. The Archdiocese of Anchorage has received an indult for the celebration of the Easter Vigil. Thus, an appropriate "perennial" starting time would be **8:30pm for the Anchorage area and 9:00pm** for other areas of the archdiocese.

**Order of celebration.** The rites of the Vigil are to be celebrated in the order in which they appear in the *Sacramentary* and *RCIA*. Parts of the Easter Vigil liturgy are never to be celebrated at other times on Holy Saturday, nor are they to be repeated at the Masses of Easter Sunday.

**New paschal candle.** Each year a new paschal candle must be used. It should be made of wax and worthy in size and in beauty, befitting its role in the liturgy of this night, throughout the Easter season, and at the celebrations of baptism and burial throughout the year. Candles that are metal or plastic forms "refilled" by smaller candles are inconsistent with the candle's symbolic role, and so are not allowed.

**Liturgy of the Word.** The reading of the word of God is, in the words of the *Sacramentary*, "the fundamental element of the Easter Vigil." Though the number of readings from the Hebrew Scriptures may be reduced from seven to three, this is not to be done lightly. No one should look at this night's liturgy as simply a "long Mass." It is a Vigil, and should be conducted as such (with appropriate catechesis through the bulletin, etc., beforehand). The readings and psalms should be given the greatest care in preparation and celebration.

**The parts unique to the Vigil which should always be sung are:**

- **the acclamations during the procession with the paschal candle;**
- **the Easter Proclamation (Exsultet); [may be sung by a Cantor]**
- **the Gospel *alleluia* acclamation;**
- **the Litany of the Saints; and**
- **and the acclamation after the blessing of water.**

**Sacraments of initiation.** The planning for the baptismal liturgy should provide for its beauty and for the full preparation and participation of the assembly. Planners and ministers will have to work with both the *Sacramentary* and the *RCIA* ritual books.

When adults are baptized at the Vigil, the liturgy attains its fullness, for there is the paschal mystery of the Lord's dying and rising in our midst. When there are no adults to be baptized, the parish is encouraged to have the baptism of infants at the Vigil, if possible. **The fullness of the rite of baptism comes when immersion is possible (the pouring of water over the entire body).** Parishes should work toward the fullness of this sign.

Those who are baptized at the Easter Vigil are to be confirmed immediately afterwards by the presiding priest at the Easter Vigil liturgy. These confirmations may **not** be postponed to a later time. Baptism and confirmation are proper to the presiding priest's ministry, and may not be delegated to another priest or to a deacon.

Priests appointed by the Archbishop to parish ministry have the faculty to confirm baptized Catholics, but only in two categories:

1. Baptized Catholic seeking readmission who has been an apostate from the faith.
2. Baptized Catholic who has been formed in a non-Catholic religion.

However, in a third category (baptized Catholic who has never been catechized nor has ever put that faith into practice), pastors must request the delegation of this faculty from the Archbishop.

Where priests do have the faculty to confirm, it is encouraged that they do so at the Easter Vigil or on one of the Sundays of the Easter season. It is important that adults who are received into full communion at the Vigil Mass have the opportunity to celebrate the sacrament of penance at an earlier time. Appropriate catechesis on the sacrament of reconciliation should be an integral part of their catechetical formation. Such catechesis should emphasize the realities of sin and grace, forgiveness and reconciliation.

## Easter Sunday

**Sequence.** The Easter Sequence is sung or said on Easter Sunday after the second reading and before the Gospel *alleluia* acclamation. The Sequence is also optional throughout the octave of Easter.

**Renewal of Baptismal Promises.** In the United States, the renewal of baptismal promises replaces the Creed on Easter Sunday. This is followed by a sprinkling of the people with the water that was blessed at the Easter Vigil.

**Dismissal.** At the conclusion of the Mass, the deacon should dismiss the people with a dismissal form that includes a double *alleluia*. The double *alleluia* is also to be used for the dismissal at all Masses throughout the octave of Easter.

## The Easter Season

The Triduum is concluded liturgically with Evening Prayer on Easter Sunday. The Triduum leads us to the Easter season, the fifty days from Easter Sunday until after Evening Prayer on Pentecost Sunday. This is the Church's most ancient season and, now that the full rites of Christian initiation are restored, it may again be possible for Eastertime to be kept as a special season for Catholics, with its music, customs, and cycle of scriptures.

**Octave of Easter.** All of the days in the octave of Easter (the eight days from Easter Sunday through the Second Sunday of Easter) have the rank of solemnity. Funeral Masses are permitted on the weekdays, but no other ritual Masses may be celebrated during this time. Also, the *Gloria* is to be sung or recited; however, the Creed is to be omitted. Preface of Easter I is also to be used, and the double *alleluia* is to be used in the dismissal.

**Second Sunday of Easter.** The octave of Easter concludes with the Second Sunday of Easter, which is now subtitled "Divine Mercy Sunday." The proper prayers and readings are those shown for the Second Sunday of Easter in the *Sacramentary*. No additional prayers or services are required that day; however, pastors may choose to have a Divine Mercy prayer service at a time later in the day. It is not appropriate to incorporate a Divine Mercy prayer service into a Mass or to attach such a service to the beginning or end of a Mass.

**Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling of Holy Water.** It is recommended that a Blessing and Sprinkling of Holy Water replace the Penitential Rite at all Sunday Masses during the Easter season, including Pentecost.

**Solemnity of Ascension.** The Ascension of the Lord is celebrated this year on **Sunday, May 28, 2006**. This is the case throughout the United States (except in a few ecclesiastical provinces) and all of Latin America.

**Pentecost Sequence.** The Sequence is sung or said on Pentecost after the second reading and before the Gospel *alleluia* acclamation.

**Easter Candle.** The Easter Candle, a symbol of the presence of the risen Christ among the people of God, remains in the sanctuary or near the altar or ambo throughout the Easter season. After Evening Prayer II on the solemnity of Pentecost, the Easter candle is placed near the baptismal font, where it should be displayed with honor.

## Lenten Fast and Abstinence Regulations

Lent begins each year with the celebration of Ash Wednesday (March 1, 2006) and concludes 40 days later before the celebration of the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday (April 13, 2006).

As your faith community begins its observance of the Lenten Season, you may notice some changes. Decor and musical accompaniment may be more subdued so that the penitential character of the season is better preserved. The Alleluia is also not used from the beginning of Lent until the Easter Vigil. While weddings are permitted during Lent, they are to reflect the special nature of the season. Funeral Masses may not be celebrated on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday or Easter Sunday.

In addition to choosing their own penitential practices, Catholics are also asked to observe the practices of fast and abstinence during the 40 days of Lent.

1. Everyone 14 years of age or over is bound to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and all the Fridays of Lent.
2. Archbishop Roger L. Schwietz has granted a dispensation from abstinence for all the faithful in the Archdiocese of Anchorage on Friday, March 17, 2006, the Feast of Saint Patrick.
3. Everyone 18 years of age and under 59 years of age is bound to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. (The obligation of fasting ceases with the celebration of one's 59th birthday.)
4. On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, only one full meatless meal is allowed. Two other smaller meatless 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 on these two days, but liquids, including milk and fruit juices are allowed. When health or ability to work would be seriously affected, the law does not oblige.
5. Catholics should not lightly excuse themselves from these prescribed minimal penitential practices.