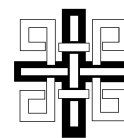


SEASON OF LENT 2026

Sunday Cycle A, Weekdays Year II

18 February 2026 – 2 April 2026



Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and ends before the celebration of the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday. (*UNLY* #28)

SEASONAL FOCUS

The season of Lent has a twofold character: baptism and penance. "More use is to be made of the baptismal features proper to the Lenten liturgy; some of them, which used to flourish in bygone days, are to be restored as may seem good." (*CSL* #109)

"During Lent penance should not be only internal and individual, but also external and social. The practice of penance should be fostered in ways that are possible in our own times and in different regions, and according to the circumstances of the faithful." (*CSL* #110)

"Lent is ordered to preparing for the celebration of Easter, since the Lenten liturgy prepares for the celebration of the Paschal Mystery both catechumens, by the various stages of Christian Initiation, and the faithful, who recall their own Baptism and do penance." (*UNLY* #27)

FASTING & ABSTINENCE

The forty days of fasting before Easter includes every day of Lent except Sundays, beginning on Ash Wednesday and ending on Holy Saturday inclusive. Thus, there are forty-six days of Lent (including Good Friday and Holy Saturday), but only forty fast days since Sundays are excluded. When fasting, a person is permitted to eat one full meal, as well as two smaller meals that together are not equal to a full meal. Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are universal days of both fasting and abstinence from eating meat. Abstinence is also observed on all Fridays of Lent. Catholics age 14 and older are bound to observe abstinence regulations except for serious reasons; Catholics age 18-59 are bound to observe fasting regulations except for serious reasons. For all other weekdays of Lent, the Church encourages fasting, either in the traditional sense or through some other form of self-denial determined by conscience. Other devotions, such as the Stations of the Cross, the rosary, scripture study, participation in daily Mass, and service to those in need, are strongly recommended. (*CCL* #1249-1253; *USCCB Pastoral Statement on Penance and Abstinence*)

LECTIONARY & MISSAL

- ⌘ Cycle A of Sunday readings is proclaimed. Year II weekday readings are proclaimed.
- ⌘ A homily is always done on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. "On other days it is recommended, especially on the weekdays of Advent, Lent, and Easter Time..." (*GIRM* #66)
- ⌘ A Prayer Over the People, which is provided in the Missal and augments the simple blessing given at the end of Mass, is obligatory on Ash Wednesday and the Sundays of Lent. It is optional on other days.
- ⌘ The two Eucharistic Prayers for Reconciliation are especially appropriate for use during Lent. They have been provided with proper Prefaces, but they may also be used with other Prefaces.
- ⌘ During Lent, all Memorials of saints are observed as optional. Hence, they may be omitted or observed as Commemorations. For Commemorations: at Mass, the Collect of the saint may replace the Collect of the day. At Lauds and Vespers, the concluding prayer for the Saint (from the Proper or Common) may replace the concluding prayer of the office.

BB = Book of Blessings
BLS = Built of Living Stones
CCL = Code of Canon Law
CSL = Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy
GIRM = General Instruction of the Roman Missal
UNLY = Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year
OCF = Order of Christian Funerals
OCM = Order of Celebrating Matrimony
OCIA = Order of Christian Initiation of Adults

KEY DATES

⌘ **ASH WEDNESDAY – February 18, 2026 [Violet]**
Lectionary #219; No Penitential Act

BLESSING AND DISTRIBUTION OF ASHES

On Ash Wednesday, the blessing and distribution of ashes normally takes place during Mass, after the homily. However, when circumstances require, the blessing and distribution may take place apart from Mass during a celebration of the word of God. (See *Book of Blessings* #1656-1678).

These ashes are of branches of the olive tree, or, according to custom, of the palm tree or other trees, which have been blessed the previous year.

The ordinary minister for the blessing of ashes is a priest or deacon. Others (e.g. extraordinary ministers of holy communion) may assist with the imposition of ashes where there is genuine need, especially for the sick and shut-ins. One of the following formulas is used: “Repent, and believe in the Gospel.” Or “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Order of Blessing and Distribution of Ashes within Mass (*Roman Missal*)

Homily

Blessing and Distribution of Ashes

Universal Prayer

[Creed is not said.]

⌘ **FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT – February 22, 2026 [Violet]**
Lectionary #22

⌘ **SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT – March 1, 2026 [Violet]**
Lectionary #25

⌘ **THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT – March 8, 2026 [Violet]**
Lectionary # 28

The first scrutiny of the catechumens may take place (see *OCIA* #150-156). In this case, the Propers from the Ritual Mass for the First Scrutiny are used.

⌘ **FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (LAETARE SUNDAY) – March 15, 2026 [Rose or Violet]**
Lectionary # 31

The second scrutiny of the catechumens may take place (see *OCIA* #164-170). In this case, the Propers from the Ritual Mass for the Second Scrutiny are used.

⌘ **SOLEMNITY OF ST. JOSEPH, SPOUSE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AND PRINCIPAL PATRON OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF LOUISVILLE – Thursday, March 19 [White]**
Lectionary #543; Gloria and Creed.

⌘ **FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT – March 22, 2026 [Violet]**
Lectionary # 34

The third scrutiny of the catechumens may take place (see *OCIA* #171-177). In this case, the Propers from the Ritual Mass for the Third Scrutiny are used.

⌘ **SOLEMNITY OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD – Wednesday, March 25 [White]**
Lectionary #545; Gloria and Creed (genuflection at “by the Holy Spirit”)

⌘ PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD – March 29, 2026 [Red]

Lectionary #37, 38

At the Procession with Palms: Matthew 21:1-11

At the Mass: Isaiah 50:4-7; Psalm 22:8-9, 17-18a, 19-20, 23-24; Philippians 2:6-11; Matthew 26:14-27:66 or Matthew 27:11-54

INTRODUCTORY RITE FOR PALM SUNDAY: SUMMARY OF THE 3 FORMS

First Form: The Procession. This is recommended for the principal parish Mass. The faithful hold palm branches and gather at another building or a place outside the main church. At this location, Mass begins with a song or chant, followed by the sign of the cross, greeting, prayer, sprinkling of palms, Gospel reading (incense optional), brief homily (optional), and the procession. The procession follows the usual order of ministers, with the faithful entering last. It is accompanied by singing. The priest may wear the cope during the procession and change into the chasuble after venerating the altar. Once all are in place, the Collect concludes the Introductory Rite.

Second Form: The Solemn Entrance. Ministers and a representative group of the faithful gather somewhere inside the church, but not in the sanctuary. Others gather in the church as usual, or near the entrance, holding palm branches. Mass begins with a song or chant, followed by the sign of the cross, greeting, prayer, sprinkling of palms, Gospel reading (incense optional), and the procession. The procession follows the usual order of ministers, with the representative group of the faithful entering last. It is accompanied by singing. Once all are in place, the Collect concludes the Introductory Rite.

Third Form: The Simple Entrance. This may be used at Palm Sunday Masses where neither of the first two forms is possible or desirable. All gather in the church as usual. Mass begins with the entrance song and usual procession of ministers to the sanctuary. It continues with the Sign of the Cross, Greeting, Penitential Act, and Collect.

WORSHIP ENVIRONMENT

- ⌘ It is not appropriate to remove Holy Water from fonts and stoups for the Lenten season. This is not only because of the seasonal focus on the waters of baptism but also because the Church encourages the faithful to avail themselves frequently of sacraments and sacramentals such as Holy Water. The Lenten fast should not be interpreted as fasting from the sacraments and sacramentals of the Church. Holy Water fonts are emptied before the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday and refilled before the Easter Vigil. This corresponds with the days of the Sacred Triduum when Eucharist is not celebrated (Good Friday and Holy Saturday). [See letter Prot. N. 569/00/L from Congregation for Divine Worship, dated March 14, 2000.]
- ⌘ "During Lent it is forbidden for the altar to be decorated with flowers. Exceptions, however, are *Laetare* Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent), Solemnities, and Feasts." Décor should show moderation befitting the season. (*GIRM* #305)
- ⌘ The practice of covering crosses and images throughout the church may be observed beginning on the Fifth Sunday of Lent (March 22). Crosses remain covered until the end of the celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday, but images remain covered until the beginning of the Easter Vigil.

MUSIC

- ⌘ “In Lent the playing of the organ and musical instruments is allowed only in order to support the singing. Exceptions, however, are *Laetare* Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent), Solemnities, and Feasts.” (*GIRM* #313)
- ⌘ The Gloria is not sung or recited on the Sundays of Lent. However, it is sung or recited on Solemnities within the Lenten season: the Solemnity of St. Joseph (Mar. 19) and the Solemnity of the Annunciation (Mar. 25) (*GIRM* #53)
- ⌘ Throughout Lent and until the Paschal Vigil, the Alleluia is not said or sung. Instead, the verse before the Gospel as given in the Lectionary is sung. It is also possible to sing another acclamation of praise, as found in the *Graduale*. (*UNLY* #28, *GIRM* #62)
- ⌘ Common Psalms: “The psalm as a rule is drawn from the Lectionary ... Nevertheless, in order that the people may be able to join in the responsorial psalm more readily, some texts of responses and psalms have been chosen, according to the different seasons of the year and classes of saints, for optional use, whenever the psalm is sung, in place of the text corresponding to the reading.” (Lectionary #173/174)

Common Response for the Season of Lent [Lectionary #173]

- ⌘ “Remember, O Lord, your faithfulness and love.”

Common Psalms for the Season of Lent [Lectionary #174]

- ⌘ Psalm 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14, 17 – “Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.”
- ⌘ Psalm 91:1-2, 10-11, 12-13, 14, 16 – “Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble.”
- ⌘ Psalm 130:1-2, 3-4, 4-6, 7-8 – “With the Lord there is mercy, and fullness of redemption.”

RITUAL CELEBRATIONS

- ⌘ The funeral Mass may not be used on Ash Wednesday, on the Sundays of Lent, or during the Triduum. The funeral liturgy outside Mass may be celebrated on any day during Lent. (*GIRM* #380, *OCF* #271)
- ⌘ The nuptial Mass may not be used on Ash Wednesday, on the Sundays of Lent, on the Solemnity of St. Joseph (Mar. 19), on the Solemnity of the Annunciation (Mar. 25) or during Holy Week. The Order for Celebrating Matrimony without Mass may be celebrated on any day during Lent. No weddings may be celebrated on Good Friday or Holy Saturday. (*OCM* #34)
- ⌘ The norms for music and worship environment during the season of Lent (outlined above) apply equally to ritual celebrations during this time, such as weddings and funerals.
- ⌘ “The days of Holy Week, from Monday to Thursday inclusive, have precedence over all other celebrations. It is not fitting that baptisms or confirmations be celebrated on these days since they have their natural place in the Easter Vigil.” (*Ordo*)
- ⌘ The Handing on of the Creed (*OCIA* #157-163) and the Handing on of the Lord’s Prayer (*OCIA* #178-184) normally take place at a weekday Mass during the weeks following first and third scrutinies, respectively. For pastoral reasons, they may be held during the period of the catechumenate instead.
- ⌘ A communal celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation according to Rite II of the Rite of Penance is one way of assisting the people of God in preparing for the celebration of the paschal mystery. “It is fitting that the Lenten Season conclude, both for the individual Christian as well as for the whole Christian community, with a penitential celebration... Such a celebration should take place before the Easter Triduum, and should not immediately precede the Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper. However, where there is genuine pastoral need, the sacrament of penance may be celebrated on Good Friday and Holy Saturday.” (*Ordo*)