

As another Lenten journey of conversion begins on Ash Wednesday, February 18, 2026 and ends with the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, April 2, 2026, the Catholic Church calls all Catholics to a deeper spirit of penance, fasting, almsgiving and prayer, "which express conversion in relation to oneself, to God, and to others" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos. 1434 and 1969).

To foster a greater spirit of penance, reparation for sin, to encourage self-denial, which guide us more closely in the footsteps of Christ, the Church reminds us of the following obligations of fast and abstinence during Lent, and also admonishes us all to deeper prayer and worship.

Abstinence

All who have celebrated their 14th birthday are bound to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, all Fridays of Lent and Good Friday.

Fasting

Everyone, from the celebration of their 18th birthday to their 59th birthday, is bound to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Fasting means eating only one full meal each day. Two other partial meals, sufficient to maintain strength, may be taken; but together they should not equal another full meal. Eating between meals is not permitted, but liquids are allowed.

Voluntary fasting on other weekdays of Lent is highly recommended. When health or ability to work would be seriously affected, neither the law of fasting nor the law of abstinence

obliges. These are minimal penitential practices and should not be lightly excused. If in doubt, please consult your parish priest.

Other recommended forms of fasting, as regards alcoholic drink, needless television, video games, Internet use, and social entertainment, are of true spiritual value and strongly encouraged.

Almsgiving

The act of giving to the poor, in the most ancient tradition of the Church, is an expression of penance, a witness of fraternal charity, and an expression of Lenten conversion. Catholics are encouraged to support generously the charitable works of the whole Church: through regular stewardship to their parish and support of charities.

Prayer

To deepen one's love for Christ, Catholics are urged to participate in the sacramental life of the Church during Lent by attending daily Mass and frequenting the sacrament of Reconciliation.

Infant Baptism

"To illustrate the paschal character of Baptism, it is recommended that the sacrament be celebrated at the Easter Vigil or on a Sunday, when the Church commemorates the Resurrection of the Lord." (*Order of Baptism of Children*, no. 9). Baptisms may certainly take place during Lent, preferably on a Sunday, but any day other than Good Friday and Holy Saturday (and even then in the case of danger of death).

Confirmation

Any persons who were baptized Catholic but never catechized and now wish to receive the sacrament of Confirmation, may be

confirmed by a priest at the Easter Vigil (or any other time) *only if written delegation is given* to the priest by the diocesan bishop. The priest is asked to contact Bishop O'Donnell in writing *well in advance* of the Easter Vigil, providing the candidate's full name, the date and church of Baptism, and an explanation of the reason for this request. Bishop O'Donnell will gladly consider each pastoral request on an individual basis.

Reconciliation

Lent is also a privileged time for celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation, including its communal celebration. Church law does not permit general absolution at communal celebrations of Reconciliation.

Regarding the sacrament of Reconciliation for baptized adults seeking full communion with the church, any previously baptized adult to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church should appropriately celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation before the Easter Vigil.

Wedding Masses

Wedding Masses may not be celebrated during the Easter Triduum, on the Sundays of Lent, Ash Wednesday, or during Holy Week. Marriages that do take place at other times during Lent should be according to the proper liturgical norms and provisions, mindful of the penitential spirit of the season. According to the instructions given in the Third Edition of the Roman Missal, the Gloria is to be sung, or at the very least, recited, at all wedding Masses, including those celebrated during Lent.

Funeral Masses

Funeral Masses may not be celebrated on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, or Holy Saturday, nor on the Sundays of Lent. When pastoral reasons require a funeral to be celebrated on these days, a Liturgy of the Word with the Final Commendation is to be held.

Mass may not be celebrated on Holy Saturday, April 4, 2026, except the **Easter Vigil**, which may be celebrated only after nightfall.

Easter Duty

All Catholics who have been initiated into the Holy Eucharist are bound to receive Holy Communion worthily at least once during Easter Time. Of course, Catholics are encouraged to receive Holy Communion as often as possible, not only during Eastertide. However, anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before approaching to receive Holy Communion.

Covering of Crosses and Images in Lent

From a rubric of the Roman Missal for the Fifth Sunday of Lent: "In the dioceses of the United States, the practice of covering crosses and images throughout the church from this Sunday of Lent may be observed. 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."

Neither the Stations of the Cross nor stained glass windows are ever veiled. The veils are usually made of lightweight purple cloth without any decoration.

Use of Holy Water during Lent

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments has stated (3/14/03: Prot. N. 569/00/L): "This Dicastery is able to respond that the removing of holy water from the fonts during the season of Lent is not permitted, in particular, for two reasons:

"1. The liturgical legislation in force does not foresee this innovation, which in addition to being 'praeter legem' is contrary to a balanced understanding of the season of Lent, which though truly being a season of penance, is also a season rich in the symbolism of water and baptism, constantly evoked in liturgical texts.

"2. The encouragement of the Church that the faithful avail themselves frequently of the sacraments is to be understood to apply also to the season of Lent. The 'fast' and 'abstinence' which the faithful embrace in this season does not extend to abstaining from the sacraments or sacramentals of the Church.

"The practice of the Church has been to empty the holy water fonts on the days of the Sacred Triduum in preparation of the blessing of the water at the Easter Vigil, and it corresponds to those days on which the Eucharist is not celebrated (i.e., Good Friday and Holy Saturday)."

Musical Instruments during Advent and Lent

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (2011) states in no. 313:

"In advent the use of the organ and other musical instruments should be marked by a moderation suited to the character of this time of year, without expressing in anticipation the full joy of the Nativity of the Lord.

"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."

Holy Thursday Adoration

The Roman Missal for Holy Thursday states: "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."

Thus, adoration may continue during the night but not "solemn adoration." This interpretation is confirmed by other documents such as the Directory of Popular Piety and a circular letter on the celebration of the Easter solemnities published by the Holy See in 1988. No. 56 of this letter states: "Where appropriate, this prolonged Eucharistic adoration may be accompanied by the reading of some part of the gospel of Saint John (ch. 13-17). From midnight onward, however, the adoration should be made without external solemnity, for the day of the Lord's passion has begun."

The practice of withdrawing the Blessed Sacrament to the sacristy safe is not a correct interpretation of the norms of the Roman Missal. Even if local circumstances don't allow for the church to remain open after midnight, the Blessed Sacrament should remain on the altar of repose until the moment of Holy Communion during the Good Friday rites.

Finally, all the documents recall that it is totally forbidden to expose the Blessed Sacrament in a monstrance at any moment of Holy Thursday.

Good Friday Services

"This liturgy by its very nature may not, however, be celebrated in the absence of a priest." (Roman Missal rubric for Good Friday) A

deacon alone may not preside, though he could proclaim the part of Christ in the Passion and preach the homily.

During the prostration, at the start of the liturgy, only the priest and deacon (if they are able) prostrate. Other ministers and the faithful kneel.

During the unveiling of the cross (which may be a plain cross, though the Church has a long custom of using a crucifix), the singing of "Behold the Wood of the Cross" is done by the priest, but he may be assisted in this singing by the deacon, or even the cantor or choir.

Musical instruments should only be used to support singing and should be subdued.

The rubric in the Roman Missal states, "After the celebration, the altar is stripped, but the cross remains on the altar with **two or four candlesticks** (emphasis added)." Candles are always a sign of presence. In the absence of the Blessed Sacrament, the cross becomes the sacramental presence in the church, which is why we genuflect to it and why we keep candles burning around it.

Timing of the Easter Vigil

According to U.S. Naval Oceanography tables, astronomical twilight, defined as that point in the evening when the sun does not contribute to sky illumination, will occur in Jefferson City on Saturday, April 4, 2026 at 8:07 pm. Therefore, **in the Diocese of Jefferson City, it is legitimate to begin the Easter Vigil at 8:15 pm.**

According to the document from the CDW in 1988 on "The Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts," "The entire celebration of the Easter Vigil takes place at night. It should not begin before nightfall."

If you have any questions concerning the above mentioned matters, please contact [Father Dan Merz](#).

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