



**ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE of ORANGE**

PASTORAL CENTER: OFFICE FOR WORSHIP
13280 CHAPMAN AVENUE, GARDEN GROVE, CA 92840

MEMORANDUM

TO: Clergy, Liturgical Directors, Staff of Catholic Schools, and Beloved Faithful

FROM: Deacon Modesto Cordero, Director Office for Worship

DATE: January 14, 2026

SUBJECT: Diocese of Orange 2026 Lenten Regulations

The upcoming Lenten season begins on Ash Wednesday, **February 18, 2026**, and concludes with the start of the Easter Triduum at the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, **April 2, 2026**. This sacred time invites us into a period of spiritual reflection and preparation for the joyful celebration of Easter.

Lent offers a special opportunity to deepen our faith as we accompany catechumens preparing to receive the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist, and as those already baptized renew their commitment through prayer, penance, and charitable giving.

Throughout the Lenten season, there is a particular emphasis on engaging in both spiritual and corporal works of mercy. These acts serve as tangible expressions of our faith and demonstrate our commitment to caring for our neighbors in both their physical and spiritual needs.

Enclosed are guidelines outlining the practices that Catholics in the Diocese of Orange are called to observe during this holy season of Lent.

FASTING

In the dioceses of the United States, Catholics between the ages of 18 and 59 are obliged to fast on Ash Wednesday (**February 18, 2026**) and Good Friday (**April 3, 2026**).

Fasting permits one full meal and two smaller meals, which together should not equal a full meal. Food and drink between meals are not permitted on fast days, except for water and medicine.

ABSTINENCE FROM MEAT

Catholics aged 14 and older are to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, all Fridays of Lent, and Good Friday.

Abstinence means refraining from eating meat such as beef, veal, pork, or poultry. Eggs and dairy products are permitted. Fish and shellfish may be consumed; however, the penitential character of abstinence should always be kept in mind.



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EASTER DUTY

All the faithful, after being initiated into the Most Holy Eucharist, are obliged to receive Holy Communion at least once a year. This precept is to be fulfilled during the Easter Season, unless, for a just cause, it is fulfilled at another time during the year. For this purpose, the period is extended to include all the weeks of Lent and the Easter Season through Pentecost Sunday (**May 24, 2026**).

LENTEN PRACTICES

During Lent, the faithful are encouraged to attend daily Mass, receive Holy Communion, participate in penance services, and receive sacramental absolution. They are also urged to take part in public and private exercises of piety, give generously to works of mercy and charity, perform acts of kindness toward the sick, the aged, and the poor, practice voluntary self-denial—especially regarding food, drink, and worldly amusements—and pray more fervently, particularly for the intentions of the Holy Father.

Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, falls this year on **February 18**. Ashes are blessed as a sign of our entry into a season of conversion, repentance, and reconciliation. Ashes are to be blessed by a bishop, priest, or deacon. Others may assist the clergy in the distribution of ashes.

Lent is an especially fitting time to preach the Gospel message of reconciliation and for pastors to make available frequent communal celebrations of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In this way, the social and ecclesial dimensions of sin and reconciliation may be emphasized. It should be noted, however, that general absolution may not be given at such communal celebrations.

Funeral Masses may not be celebrated on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, or on the Sundays of Lent. When pastoral reasons require a funeral to be celebrated on these days, only a Funeral Liturgy Outside of Mass may be held.

To provide the faithful with opportunities for Lenten prayer, pastors are encouraged to offer prayer services at least twice a week, including the Way of the Cross on Fridays, Exposition and Benediction, Evening Prayer, and evening Masses. A homily or instruction should be included.

Marriages may be celebrated within Mass, and the Nuptial Blessing may be given. However, in keeping with the penitential character of the Lenten season, elaborate weddings and celebrations are discouraged.

The Celebration of Matrimony (Ritual Mass) may not take place on the following days: Ash Wednesday (February 18), the Annunciation of the Lord (March 25), the Chrism Mass (March 30), or during the Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday: April 2–4).



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Those responsible for the religious formation of the young are encouraged, whenever possible, to bring children to church during Lent for the devotion of the Way of the Cross. When circumstances permit, it is commendable to provide a separate Way of the Cross adapted specifically for children.

No morning Mass is to be celebrated on Holy Thursday; Morning Prayer is recommended instead. After the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, the Blessed Sacrament is to be reposed in a tabernacle. ***The Blessed Sacrament is not to be carried in a monstrance to the altar of repose, nor is it to be exposed in a monstrance.***

THE SACRED PASCHAL TRIDUUM

"Since Christ accomplished his work of human redemption and of the perfect glorification of God principally through his Paschal Mystery, in which by dying he has destroyed our death, and by rising restored our life, the sacred Paschal Triduum of the Passion and Resurrection of the Lord shines forth as the high point of the entire liturgical year" (Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the Calendar, #18). Three major liturgical principles may be of help here:

- The Triduum may be viewed as a single liturgical action that occurs over a period of three days.
- The Triduum is not part of Lent, but in its entirety, celebrates the Easter event.
- The entire focus of the Triduum is on the Triumph of the Cross and the Resurrection.

Good Friday has become a day specially consecrated to prayer and meditation on the passion and death of Christ. Where the devotion of Three Hours is observed, however, it should not conflict with the primary importance of the liturgy of Good Friday. Morning Prayer is recommended.

In compliance with (1) the liturgical norms of the Roman Missal on "Easter Vigil" #3, (2) the Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts #78 and (3) published Diocesan regulations, the Easter Vigil must begin after nightfall (not before **8:09 PM**).

NOTE: The above directives should be published in parish bulletins for the benefit of the faithful, adding any specific parish or deanery events. What follows pertains only to clergy and liturgy planners and need not be published for parishioners.



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THE PASCHAL CANDLE

“The Paschal candle should be prepared, which for effective symbolism must be made of wax, never be artificial, be renewed each year, be only one in number, and be of sufficiently large size, so that it may evoke the truth that Christ is the light of the world. It is blessed with the signs and words prescribed in the Missal or by the Conference of Bishops (from the 1988 Circular Letter on the preparation for Easter published by the Congregation for Divine Worship).”

[Note: Since the Paschal candle is to be lit for all liturgies during the Easter season and during baptisms and funerals, it often happens that the candle burns down so much that it no longer is a sign that clearly proclaims Christ’s victory over the darkness of sin and death. To prevent this from happening, parishes are encouraged to purchase candles that will be able to be proper symbols until the following Easter Vigil.]

A glass chimney is recommended to shield the flame of the Paschal Candle at the Easter Vigil liturgy from the time it is lit until it is safely standing in its place in the church.

THE EASTER DISMISSAL WITH ALLELUIAS

The dismissal, from the Easter Vigil through the Octave of Easter, ending with the Second Sunday of Easter, inclusive, should be followed by a double Alleluia! preferably sung. The same is true for the liturgies of Pentecost Sunday and its Vigil. *The double Alleluia is not added at other liturgies during the Easter season.*

For additional information or inquiries, feel free to reach out to me at mcordero@rcbo.org or (714) 282-3041.

Blessings!