

LITURGY UPDATE

Liturgical Memos

December 19:

Reconciliation Monday

All parishes in the Archdiocese of New York and the Diocese of Brooklyn will have priests available to hear confessions from 2pm-4pm and from 6pm-8pm. Parishes may wish to schedule an [Advent Penance Service](#) on this day.

Lenten Reconciliation Monday will be observed on April 3, 2023, from 2pm-4pm and 6pm-9pm in the Archdiocese and the Dioceses of Brooklyn and Rockville Centre.

January 8:

Epiphany of the Lord

The Epiphany Announcement of the Day of Easter may be said or sung following the reading of the Gospel. The text and music for the Announcement may be found in Appendix 1 of the *Roman Missal*.

January 18-25:

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

During this period, special intentions for Christian Unity may be included in the Universal Prayer. Masses for this intention may also be selected from Masses for Various Needs and Occasions (nos. 17, 18, 19), in accordance with liturgical norms (see: *GIRM*, 373-374).



Saint Jerome with Lion, XV cent., National Library of the Netherlands

Word of God Sunday — January 22, 2023

On September 30, 2019, His Holiness Pope Francis issued an Apostolic Letter *motu proprio* entitled *Aperuit illis*, which established the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time as a day devoted to the celebration, study, and dissemination of the Word of God. Recalling the importance given by the Second Vatican Council to rediscovering Sacred Scripture for the life of the Church, Pope Francis stated that he wrote this Apostolic Letter in response to requests from the faithful around the world to celebrate a Sunday with a particular focus on the Word of God. Pope Francis invited local communities to find ways to “mark this Sunday with a certain solemnity,” and he offered several recommendations as to how this might take place:

The Homily

- “On this Sunday, it would be particularly appropriate to highlight the proclamation of the word of the Lord and to emphasize in the homily the honor that it is due” (*Aperuit illis*, 3).
- “[P]astors are primarily responsible for explaining sacred Scripture and helping everyone to understand it. ... Helping people to enter more deeply into the word of God through simple and suitable language will allow priests themselves to discover the beauty of the images used by the Lord to encourage the practice of the good. This is a pastoral opportunity that should not be wasted! ... For many of our faithful, in fact, this is the only opportunity they have to grasp the beauty of God’s word and to see it applied to their daily lives. Consequently, sufficient time must be devoted to the preparation of the homily. ... When we take time to pray and meditate on the sacred text, we can speak from the heart and thus reach the hearts of those who hear us, conveying what is essential and capable of bearing fruit” (*Aperuit illis*, 5).
- See also paragraphs 135–159 of *Evangelii gaudium* for additional teaching by Pope Francis on the nature and importance of the homily within Mass and the task of preparing to preach.



Prayers for Unity

- In *Aperuit illis*, Pope Francis states, “we are encouraged to strengthen our bonds with the Jewish people and to pray for Christian unity. ... [T]he celebration of the Sunday of the Word of God has ecumenical value, since the Scriptures point out, for those who listen, the path to authentic and firm unity” (3).
- It should be noted that the “Week of Prayer for Christian Unity” is celebrated from January 18–25, and this observance will frequently coincide with the *Sunday of the Word of God*.

Enthronement of the Word at the Ambo

- The bishops of the United States have recommended the practice of enthroneing the Word of God at the ambo, which may be possible when this liturgical appointment features a

small shelf designed for this purpose: “Our reverence for the Word of God is expressed not only in an attentive listening to and reflection upon the Scriptures, but also by the way we handle and treat the Book of the Gospels. The ambo can be designed not only for reading and preaching, but also for displaying the open Book of the Gospels or a copy of the Scriptures before and after the liturgical celebration” (*Built of Living Stones*, 62).

Acts of Reverence to the Gospel Book during the Eucharistic Celebration



- The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* [*GIRM*] contains the following instructions for the Deacon at Mass: “When he reaches the altar, if he is carrying the Book of the Gospels, he omits the sign of reverence and goes up to the altar. It is a praiseworthy practice for him to place the Book of the Gospels on the altar, after which, together with the Priest, he venerates the altar with a kiss” (*GIRM*, 173).

- “During the singing of the Alleluia ... having bowed to the altar, [the deacon] then takes up the Book of the Gospels which was placed on it and proceeds to the ambo, carrying the book slightly elevated” (*GIRM*, 175) and preceded by the thurifer and acolytes with lighted candles. Prior to the reading of the Gospel, the Gospel Book may be incensed as a sign of honor and in recognition of the presence of God in the proclamation of His Holy Word.
- In the absence of a deacon, a priest does not carry the Book of the Gospels in the opening procession, but a lector may do so (*GIRM*, 120). A priest may, however, process with the Book of the Gospels from the altar to the ambo in the manner described above.
- When a bishop is the principal celebrant at Mass, he may also impart a blessing with the Book of the Gospels after having kissed it (*GIRM*, 175).

Distribution of Bibles

- Parishes may wish to distribute Bibles or books of the Bible on Word of God Sunday, mirroring the actions of Pope Francis, who, on various occasions, has given bibles or one of the Gospels to pilgrims gathered in Saint Peter’s Square (e.g., October 5, 2014; March 22, 2015; March 12, 2016). During the distribution of bibles on March 22, 2015, for example, Pope Francis said, “Take this Gospel and carry it with you, to read it often, every day. Carry it in your purse, in your pocket, read from it often, a passage every day.”

Teaching the Practice of *lectio divina*

- In *Aperuit illis* 3 and *Evangelii gaudium* 152-153, Pope Francis highlights *lectio divina* as a practice which can be used to pray daily with the Scriptures. Clergy or other parish leaders may wish to introduce this practice during the Sunday homily or within the context of a Bible Study session.

Archdiocesan Initiatives and Resources

- In the Archdiocese of New York, the following resources have been developed and assembled by the Liturgy Office to assist parishes and families in keeping this new observance; these may be accessed by clicking on the following links:

[Enthronement of the Word of God Service](#)

[Liturgical suggestions, including homily notes and choice of liturgical texts](#)

[Sample Universal Prayer](#)

Order of Penance *Use Date Announced*

In October, the USCCB announced that the new English translation of the *Order of Penance* for use in the United States may be used as of February 22 (Ash Wednesday), 2023, and its use will become obligatory on April 16 (Divine Mercy Sunday), 2023.

The new *Order of Penance* makes two minor changes to the longstanding English translation of the formula of absolution while keeping the essential words of the formula the same. The alterations are underlined below:



God, the Father of mercies,
through the Death and Resurrection of his Son
has reconciled the world to himself
and poured out the Holy Spirit [*Spíritum Sanctum effúdit*] for the forgiveness of sins;
through the ministry of the Church
may God grant [*tribuat*] you pardon and peace.
AND I ABSOLVE YOU FROM YOUR SINS,
IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, +
AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.
R. Amen.

In the new translation of the absolution formula, “poured out” can be taken as a more descriptive translation of *effudit*, which is also the same word used in the Vulgate to describe when Mary of Bethany “poured out” perfumed oil on the feet of Jesus. As the Gospels record, this was a gesture that went above and beyond the normal expectations of hospitality. In a similar way, the mercy of God given by the power of the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Penance is extravagant, a rich outpouring of the unmerited love of God for our sakes. Relatedly, the new translation of *tribuat* as “grant,” rather than “give,” also speaks to God’s generosity and ever-present willingness to share all good things with his people, including and especially his mercy.

Catholic Book Publishing, Liturgical Training Publications, Magnificat, and Midwest Theological Forum have announced their forthcoming publication of the new *Order of Penance*, and pre-sales have already begun. Parishes in the Archdiocese of New York may wish to take advantage of discount pricing on this ritual text through the [ICS website](#).



Liturgical Preparation Aid for Seasons of Advent and Christmas

The *Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions* has published a free resource for the seasons of Advent and Christmas. This preparation aid includes: the full text of the Rite of Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution, music suggestions, sample penances, calendar advisories for the seasons of Advent and Christmas, the text of the Christmas Proclamation (to be sung before the Mass at Midnight), and the text of the Proclamation of the date of Easter (to be sung before the Mass on Epiphany).

This resource may be downloaded in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) from the Liturgy Office website and distributed freely with the permission of the Confraternity for Christian Doctrine, the USCCB, and the International Commission on English in the Liturgy.

Liturgical Q and A: Instituted Ministries of Lector, Acolyte, and Catechist

The Liturgy Office frequently receives questions concerning the blessing or institution of new lectors, acolytes, and catechists in the Archdiocese of New York. Who should be admitted to these ministries, what are the qualifications for doing so, and what rituals of blessing should be observed?

These questions stem from two apostolic letters issued by Pope Francis in 2021, one on admitting women to the instituted ministries of acolyte and lector (*Spiritus Domini*), and the other, in which he established a new instituted ministry of catechist (*Antiquum ministerium*). More recently, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued a Latin version of the ritual for the Institution of Catechists on December 3, 2021, indicating at that time that a new *editio typica* text containing the installation rites of all three ministries (Lector, Acolyte, and Catechist) should be expected sometime in 2022. In September of this year, the (now) Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments announced that this compilation of the rites of installation for all three ministries will be delayed for the time being.

In response to these developments, the USCCB's Committee on Divine Worship has indicated that the current *Rite of Institution of Lectors and Acolytes* is still to be used for the time being, along with any necessary changes of gender. Relatedly, the USCCB's current complementary norm for Canon 230.1 regarding the age and qualifications for the ministries of lector and acolyte remains in force and can serve as a guide for the discernment of candidates, both men and women. In the Archdiocese of New York, a process for implementing these new norms is being developed, and seminarians and candidates for the permanent diaconate will continue to receive these instituted ministries in the context of their respective formation programs.

Currently, a USCCB working group on the ministry of catechist is preparing a document with the canonical clarifications called for by the Holy See (e.g., qualifications, training, discernment of candidates, etc.) and hopes to present this document to the USCCB for its approval next year. As such, no catechists may be "instituted" until this work is completed.

It is often asked if all parish lectors, acolytes, and catechists should receive these ministries moving forward. In response, the USCCB has indicated that the instituted ministries of lector, acolyte, and catechist are primarily intended for those with leadership positions; that is, they are not meant to be held by every volunteer reader, server, and catechist at a parish. On the other hand, an experienced lector who trains other lectors, an acolyte who does the same for servers, or a local DRE or CRE may be suitable candidates to become instituted ministers. In the case of those who serve on a more temporary basis, such as new lectors and catechists, young altar servers, or Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, training for the proper exercise of these ministries should be given, and the blessing rituals provided in the *Book of Blessings* (see: Chapters 4, 61, 62, and 63) may be used at a commissioning ceremony.

Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions Offers Weekly Presentations on the Mass

As part of current efforts to support a Eucharistic Revival in the United States, the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions has announced an ongoing series of webinars which will feature expert presenters, online chats, and downloadable handouts on the Mass. The FDLC webinars are designed to assist clergy, religious, and laity in rediscovering the beauty and power of the Eucharistic celebration, the summit and source of the Catholic faith. Each presentation will be offered in English and will be 75 minutes in length. More information and registration will be posted in the forthcoming weeks on the [FDLC website](#).

DATE	TOPIC	PRESENTER
Feb 23	Celebration of the Paschal Mystery: Theological Foundations	Dr. James Starke
March 2	The Church at Prayer: The Introductory Rites	Fr. Ajani Gibson
March 9	Proclamation and Response: The Liturgy of the Word	Fr. Regis Armstrong
March 16	Joining in the Sacrifice: The Liturgy of the Eucharist	Fr. Matthew Ernest
March 23	Glorifying the Lord by Your Life: The Concluding Rite	TBD

Upcoming Events

Saint Joseph's Seminary Advent/Christmas Concerts: Saturday, December 3, 4pm and Sunday, December 4, 4pm. Tickets: \$35/50 (VIP seating). More information: www.dunwoodie.edu

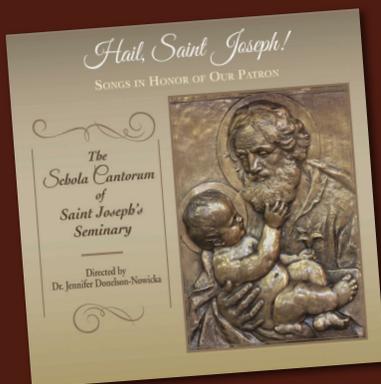
Pueri Cantores Music Festival for Youth (Grades 4-8). March 18, 2023. Church of the Blessed Sacrament in Manhattan. More information: pcchoirs.org

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