



THE CHANCERY  
OFFICE OF THE VICAR GENERAL  
ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK

MEMORANDUM

To: Brother Priests

From: JPL 

Date: February 7, 2020

Subject: Ash Wednesday, Lent, Holy Week, Triduum

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As you know, Ash Wednesday is a day that offers a valuable opportunity to set a tone for the entire season, as well as to reach out to people, some of whom are usually not often found in our churches. Aware of the considerable interest of the faithful in receiving ashes, every effort must be made through the reading of scripture and the offering of prayers to catechize them on the penitential character of Lent and the value of their Lenten practices. Here are several reminders.

1. **LENTEN FAST AND ABSTINENCE** During the season of Lent, the Church urges the faithful to reflect a spirit of penance in their daily lives through performing acts of fast and abstinence.

+Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 26 and ends on Holy Thursday, April 9.

+Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fast and abstinence. This is a serious matter within Church law.

+Fasting means only one full meal a day may be taken. Two smaller meals can be eaten to maintain physical strength but together they should not equal another full meal in quantity. Snacking between meals is not permitted. Catholics ages 18-59 are obliged to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Those who are not specifically obliged to fast are encouraged to join in the discipline of fasting to the extent that they are able.

- +Abstinence forbids the eating of meat or poultry. Those who have reached the age of 14 are obliged to abstain on Ash Wednesday and all Fridays of Lent and continues to oblige throughout their lives. Those who are not specifically obliged to abstain from eating meat are urged to join in the discipline of abstaining to the extent that they are able.
  - +Remember all Fridays of the year are designated as days of penance during which we are encouraged to practice self-denial out of gratitude for the suffering and death Jesus accepted for us.
  - +The time for fulfilling your Easter Duty extends from the First Sunday of Lent (March 1) to Holy Trinity Sunday (June 7).
2. **DISTRIBUTION OF ASHES** should only take place in a church or chapel and preferably during Mass. Classrooms and gymnasiums ought not be used when a nearby sacred setting is available.
  3. **TIME OF EASTER VIGIL** The season of Lent culminates with the celebration of the Triduum of the Lord's Last Supper, Passion, Death, and Resurrection. The Easter Vigil of the Lord's Resurrection, celebrated on Holy Saturday Night, is not to be scheduled before nightfall (*Sacramentary*, Easter Vigil, No. 3, i.e. at least half an hour after sunset.) In the Northeast this year, it will occur at 7:32.
  4. **MISCELLANY** Refer to the 2020 Paulist *Ordo* for Lenten directives (pages 66-71) and those for Holy Week, the Triduum and Easter pages (93-105).
    - a. A parish should set a good example for Lenten penance by refraining from socials.
    - b. Extended hours for confession, as well as devotions such as the stations of the cross, are encouraged.
    - c. Remember *Reconciliation Monday* on April 6 in cooperation with the dioceses of Brooklyn and Rockville Centre, with confessions available from 3:00 to 9:00 PM.
    - d. Don't forget our *Chrism Mass*, Tuesday, April 7 at 4:00 PM at the cathedral (with a reception to follow afterwards) and the *Lenten Day of Recollection for Priests*, Wednesday, March 4 at 10:30 AM at St. Joseph's Seminary.
    - e. Volume II of the *Liturgy of the Hours* is used from Ash Wednesday through Pentecost Sunday, the close of the Easter season.