



Upcoming Dates

◆ The Year of Saint Joseph:

On the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 2020, Pope Francis declared a Year of Saint Joseph and released [an apostolic letter entitled *Patris Corde*](#), marking the 150th anniversary of Blessed Pius IX declaring Saint Joseph the patron of the Universal Church. This Year of Saint Joseph will conclude on December 8, 2021.

Bishop Rhoades led an entrustment of the diocese to Saint Joseph at his Christmas Eve Mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne. The text of that entrustment prayer has been adapted for parish use and is being made available by the Office of Worship. Each parish could employ it at some point—perhaps on either the March 19th Solemnity of Saint Joseph or the May 1st memorial of Saint Joseph the Worker.

In addition, there's a short prayer to Saint Joseph that Pope Francis includes at the end of his aforementioned apostolic letter (it's also being distributed by the Office of Worship). The prayer can be made available to families, and parishes may consider praying it after each Mass. Many parishes pray the optional prayer to Saint Michael at the end of Mass. Pastors are free to decide to use the Saint Michael prayer or the Saint Joseph prayer or both or neither.

◆ January 24 — Sunday of the Word of God:

Pope Francis recently established that the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time should annually be celebrated as the “**Sunday of the Word of God.**” The Holy Father offers the following suggestions for observing this occasion:

“The various communities will find their own ways to mark this Sunday with a certain solemnity. It is important, however, that in the Eucharistic celebration the sacred text be enthroned, in order to focus the attention of the assembly on the normative value of God’s word. 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*, no. 3.

On this day, it would be most appropriate for the Book of the Gospels to be processed in and incensed at the proper time. After proclaiming the Gospel, the Book of the Gospels may be carried and set in a “suitable and dignified place” (GIRM no. 175). In addition, a nobly bound edition of the Bible could be placed in a prominent position before Mass begins.

A new memo from the USCCB is also being circulated, offering some reflections and ideas proposed by the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments for observing Sunday of the Word of God.

Families can be encouraged to extend this reverence after Mass by honoring the Word of God within the home. A potential home Bible enthronement service can be found [here in English](#) or [here in Spanish](#).

(More dates and COVID-related notes found on next page)

Upcoming Dates (Continued)

♦ **February 1 — Optional Memorial of Saint Maria Katharina Kasper:**

Following a formal request by Bishop Rhoades to the Holy See, the optional memorial of Saint Maria Katharina Kasper was officially inscribed into our diocesan liturgical calendar in late 2020. Canonized in 2018, she was the foundress of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, who have played a significant ministerial role throughout the history of this diocese.

This optional memorial may be observed on February 1st. At this time, the proper collect for Saint Katharina Kasper is not available in English, so the prayers and readings are taken from the Common of Virgins. (The official Latin proper collect may be utilized as well and is being circulated by the Office of Worship.)

♦ **April 3 — Easter Vigil Start Time:**

On Saturday, April 3, 2021, the end of civil twilight is at 8:35 PM EDT in Fort Wayne and 8:41 PM EDT in South Bend. Therefore, around 8:40 PM would be the earliest possible time to begin the Easter Vigil in the diocese.

Since the USCCB encourages waiting an extra 15-30 minutes (because total darkness occurs after civil twilight ends), around 9:00 PM would be the most appropriate start time. The Roman Missal states that the Vigil must begin in true darkness, “after nightfall.”

Upcoming Considerations in Light of COVID-19

♦ **February 3 — Throat Blessings:**

For the blessing of throats on the February 3rd memorial of Saint Blase, the USCCB advises that parishes can exercise the option provided in no. 1628 in chapter 51 of the *Book of Blessings* as an alternative during the pandemic: “a priest or deacon may give the blessing to all assembled by extending hands, without the crossed candles, over the people while saying the prayer of blessing.” Per no. 1625, this can be done at Mass either after the prayer of the faithful, or in place of the final blessing.

The practice of blessing individuals’ throats with blessed candles can still be employed if the candles do NOT actually touch the individuals (they should be held at a distance from the throat), and so long as people and ministers wear masks and observe social distancing in line.

♦ **February 17 — Distribution of Ashes on Ash Wednesday:**

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has issued instructions for how the distribution of ashes should be conducted during the pandemic.

The Holy See has ruled out the approach we Americans normally employ, whereby a bare hand is used to mark foreheads with the sign of the cross. Instead, ministers are asked to sprinkle a small amount of ashes on the top of the heads of the faithful, as is commonly done in Europe and other areas of the world. The note from the CDWDS specifies the following:

- The priest says the prayer of blessing and sprinkles the ashes with clean holy water as usual.
- Then he addresses everyone and says one of the following formulas from the Roman Missal only once over all present: “Repent, and believe in the Gospel” or “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”
- Then he (and any assisting with the distribution of ashes) puts on his mask, sanitizes his hands, and commences with the distribution. No words are spoken when sprinkling ashes.

Ash Wednesday COVID concerns (Continued)

And of course, all receiving ashes must keep their masks on while doing so, and social distancing must be maintained in the lines.

Because this method of distribution (sprinkling over the head) is largely foreign in this country, please inform parishioners ahead of time and perhaps advise against wearing light-colored clothing. Also try to ensure that the ashes you will be using are suitable for sprinkling—ashes that are overly paste-like likely would not sprinkle well.

In preparation for distributing ashes by sprinkling, the following catechetical note could be shared with the parish:

Sprinkling ashes on the top of the head recalls the biblical practice of putting on “sackcloth and ashes” as an act of penance. For example, we read in the Book of Nehemiah: “On the twenty-fourth day of this month, the Israelites gathered together while fasting and wearing sackcloth, their heads covered with dust” (Neh 9:1). While the custom in the United States has been to mark the forehead with a cross, sprinkling the ashes on the head remains the custom in other parts of the world such as Spain and Italy. However the ashes are received, the interior repentance expressed by this exterior act is at the heart of the action.

Please note that the faithful cannot self-impose their ashes.

If additional liturgies are needed due to reduced church capacities, the blessing and distribution of ashes may take place outside of Mass per *Book of Blessings* chapter 52.

◆ **March 9 — The Light Is On for You (6:00—8:00 PM)**

This annual offering of confessions throughout the diocese will continue in 2021. All the requirements for safely conducting confession as found in our diocesan liturgical directives must be followed. These include:

- Masks/face coverings required for confessor and penitents
- Social distancing of 6 feet in lines and between confessor and penitent
- Holding indoor confessions only in large/well-ventilated areas (no traditional confessional boxes or booths)
- Situating people to ensure that nobody in line is close enough to hear ongoing confessions

◆ **Holy Week Guidance**

Per the USCCB Committee on Divine Worship:

“The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued two decrees last year (dated March 19 and March 25) that provided special guidance for the celebration of Holy Week during the pandemic. The instructions that were given were intended mostly to assist priests in circumstances in which the presence of a congregation would be impossible. Those provisions, however, were explicitly granted only for the year 2020. As Lent approaches, we will have to wait to see whether the Holy See will issue similar guidance this year, should the situation continue to warrant it.”