

LENTEN REGULATIONS 2026

February 18, 2026, is Ash Wednesday, marking the beginning of the season of Lent.

THE CALL TO DO PENANCE

All of Christ's faithful are obliged by divine law, each in his or her own way, to do penance. However, so that all may be united in a certain common practice of penance, days of penance are prescribed. On these days Christ's faithful are to devote themselves in a special manner to prayer, to engage in works of piety and charity, and to deny themselves, by fulfilling more faithfully their obligations and especially by observing the laws of fast and abstinence. **The season of Lent is observed as a time of penance for the universal Church.** Thus, during these 40 days individuals are encouraged to attend daily Mass, set aside increased time for personal prayer and the study of scripture, give alms to the poor, perform voluntary acts of mortification, as well as show special solicitude for the sick, the discouraged, and the lonely. Likewise, parishes are encouraged to arrange for periods of Eucharistic Adoration and traditional devotions such as making the Way of the Cross and reciting of the Rosary (cf. cc. 1249-1250; USCCB, *Complimentary Norms*).

Ash Wednesday, which solemnly opens the season of Lent, and Good Friday, on which Christ suffered in the flesh and died for our sins, are obligatory days of fasting and abstinence from meat for Catholics. In addition, Fridays during Lent are obligatory days of abstinence from meat. The law of fasting is binding on Catholics from age 18 until age 59. When fasting, a person is permitted by long tradition to eat not more than one full meal, as well as two light meals that together are not equal to a full meal. The law of abstinence from meat is binding upon Catholics from age 14 onwards. Even those who by reason of age are not bound by these laws are to be taught the true meaning of penance (cf. cc. 1251-1252).

The ancient Paschal Fast should also be kept sacred. It is celebrated everywhere on Good Friday and, when appropriate, may be prolonged throughout Holy Saturday as a way of coming, with spirit uplifted, to the joys of the Lord's resurrection (cf. *Roman Missal-The Sacred Paschal Triduum*, 1).

EASTER DUTY

Once admitted to the blessed Eucharist, each of the faithful is obliged to receive Holy Communion at least once a year, and to fulfill this precept during the Easter season (cf. c. 920). In 2026, Paschal time extends from February 22 (First Sunday of Lent) until May 31 (Trinity Sunday).

Each of Christ's faithful who have reached the age of reason is bound to faithfully confess at least once each year all grave sins, in number and kind, of which after careful examination he or she is aware, and which have not yet been pardoned in the sacrament of Penance. It is recommended to also confess venial sins. This precept has been laid down in light of the previous one, for anyone who is conscious of grave sin may not receive the Body of the Lord without previously having been absolved in sacramental confession (cf. cc. 916, 988-989).

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PARTICULAR CELEBRATIONS & OBSERVANCES

The distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday should take place according to the rubrics and in keeping with local custom, that is, by tracing a cross of ashes on the forehead (cf. *RM-Ash Wednesday*).

Parishes are highly encouraged to offer increased opportunities for sacramental confession in preparation for Easter, whether by communal penance services with individual confessions, Days of Mercy (that is, confessions offered throughout the day), or at weekly times in addition to the regular schedule (such as before or after daily Mass, or in the evening during the week). The priests of neighboring parishes are encouraged to cooperate with one another to make these occasions widely possible.

If Marriage is to be celebrated on a day having a penitential character, especially during Lent, the spouses are to be counseled to take into account the special nature of that day. The celebration of Marriage on Good Friday and Holy Saturday is to be avoided altogether (cf. *Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, 32; *RM-Good Friday*, 1).

The Chrism Mass of the Diocese of Ogdensburg will be celebrated on Thursday, March 26 at 11:00am at St. Mary's Cathedral. All are welcome to attend. Those unable to participate in person may view the Mass via livestream at <https://www.rcdony.org/livemass>. Further details will be forthcoming.

A Funeral Mass may not be celebrated at any time on Holy Thursday or during the Paschal Triduum. The rite for a Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass may be used, even within the church, although Holy Communion may not be given (cf. *GIRM*, 380, *Order of Christian Funerals*, 178; *RM-Thursday of the Lord's Supper*, 4; *RM-Friday of the Passion of the Lord*, 2; *RM-Holy Saturday*, 3).