



Diocese of Laredo Committee on Liturgy and Divine Worship

Rev. Fr. David Muñoz, O.M.I.
Master of Episcopal Liturgical Ceremonies
1718 San Jorge Avenue
Laredo, TX 78040

Tel. (956)723-6954 ext. 15
Fax (956)723-6047
E-mail: FrDavidM@dioceseoflaredo.org

February 8, 2012

Dear Priests and Deacons,

Peace in Christ Jesus, our Lord. The Diocesan Committee on Liturgy and Divine Worship met on January 16, 2012, at San Agustín Cathedral and discussed some important concerns as we approach the celebrations of Lent and Easter. After consulting with Bishop Tamayo I provide below these important guidelines for our Diocese that will help in the worthy celebration of this Sacred time in the Church.

Below are the regulations regarding fasting and abstinence. Feel free to use them in your bulletins or parish websites.

Catholic Regulations for Lent

Ash Wednesday (February 22) and Good Friday (April 6) are days of **fasting and abstinence**, and all Fridays of Lent are days of **abstinence**.

Abstinence—requires all Catholics who have reached their 14th birthday to abstain from eating meat on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and on all Fridays during Lent (Code of Canon Law §1252). Meat is considered to be the flesh and organs of mammals and fowl. Salt and freshwater fish as well as shell fish are permitted; as well as products derived from animals such as dairy products and eggs.

Fasting—requires that a Catholic from the 18th birthday to the beginning of their 60th birthday reduce the amount of food eaten normally. The Church defines this as one meatless meal a day, and two smaller meatless meals which if added together would not exceed the main meal in quantity. Eating between meals is not permitted, but liquids, including milk and fruit juices, are allowed.

Dispensations—Besides those outside the age limits, those of unsound mind, the sick, the frail, pregnant or nursing women according to the need for meat or nourishment, manual laborers according to need, guests at a meal who cannot excuse themselves without giving great offense or causing enmity and other situations of moral or physical impossibility to observe the penitential discipline.

Building unity within our diocesan community.

Furthermore, the faithful are encouraged to observe other penitential practices during Lent. The time of Lent offers three personal challenges:

1. Almsgiving—generously giving to those in need. By doing things to help others, such as offering an extra donation to the poor or helping those in need by providing food or clothing.
2. Fasting—practicing self-discipline and self-denial. By giving up things you hunger after, such as sweets or alcohol; or activities you desire, such as vacations, concerts, or movies.
3. Prayer—reading, hearing and reflecting on the Word of God. By adding to our normal routine, such as going to daily Mass, praying the Stations of the Cross and going to Confession.

According to the rubrics in the Roman Missal the ashes to be blessed are made from: “the olive branches or branches of other trees that were blessed the previous year”. **The practice by which a “stamp” or cork in the shape of a cross is used to distribute the ashes is not licit in the Diocese of Laredo and should be discontinued.**

The practice by which Holy Water is removed from the fonts for the entirety of the time of Lent and either kept empty or filled with ashes or sand is forbidden. The Congregation of Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments (CDW) in a letter dated March 14, 2000 (Prot. N. 569/00/L) states: “The ‘fast’ and ‘abstinence’ which the faithful embrace in this season does not extend to abstaining from the sacraments or sacramentals of the Church. The practice of the Church has been to empty the Holy Water fonts on the days of the Sacred Triduum in preparation of the blessing of the water at the Easter Vigil, and it corresponds to those days on which the Eucharist is not celebrated (i.e., Good Friday and Holy Saturday).”

Paschale Solemnitatis no. 26 allows the various Episcopal Conferences to determine the regulations regarding the covering of crosses and images. The rubrics of the Third Edition of the Roman Missal indicate that in the United States this practice **may** be observed beginning on the vigil of the Fifth Sunday of Lent. Crosses remain covered until the celebration of the Lord’s Passion on Good Friday but images remain covered until the beginning of the Easter Vigil. **Covering crosses and images for the entire duration of Lent is not permitted.**

The Rite of Election of Catechumens and of the call to continuing conversion of candidates who are preparing for Confirmation and/or Eucharist or reception into the full Communion of the Catholic Church will be held on March 4, 2012 at San Agustín Cathedral beginning at 3:00 PM. If your community has RCIA candidates, contact Sandra Silva at San Agustín Cathedral (956-722-1382) for complete details.

Also, please be aware that to preserve the penitential character of the time of Lent, the Ceremonial of Bishops (no. 252) asks that altars not be covered in flowers and that musical instruments be used to provide the necessary support for singing. Please try to keep a solemn and simple décor appropriate for this sacred time and encourage your music ministries to maintain the sacredness and solemnity of Lent through their choice of music.

Building unity within our diocesan community.

Keep in mind that funeral Masses may NOT be celebrated on Holy Thursday morning or the Triduum. On days when the Funeral Mass may not be celebrated the funeral liturgy outside Mass may be celebrated.

Since the 25th of March, normally the Solemnity of the Annunciation, falls on a Sunday this year, its observance will be transferred to Monday, March 26. As on Christmas Day, all genuflect at the words in the creed “and by the Holy Spirit...became man”.

In the event that the Passion narrative is read in the traditional way, that is in parts, the part of Christ is reserved to the priest (*PS 33*). And a homily, albeit brief, must take place after the reading of the Passion narrative.

Finally, as we approach the celebration of Easter, keep in mind that the Easter Vigil cannot begin before nightfall. Bishop Tamayo asks that, in 2012, the Easter Vigil not begin before 8:00pm.

I would encourage all to look closely at the rubrics for the Triduum to ensure a faithful and solemn celebration of those Sacred days. Thank you for your attention to these matters. May God bless you and Mary Immaculate intercede for each of you and our Diocese.

In Christ and Mary Immaculate,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fr. David Muñoz, OMI". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Fr. David Muñoz, OMI
Master of Episcopal Liturgical Ceremonies