What a year this has been! We entered it still in the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic, with restrictions continuing to be imposed on our lives and social gatherings. On top of that a new strain of coronavirus, the Delta Variant, emerged. In May it seemed that the numbers of COVID cases were declining and that we were beginning to move beyond the restrictions we had to put up with since March 2020. But after a brief glimmer of hope, the numbers began to spike in the mid-summer and we seemed to be sliding backward.

Then came “Ida,” the most severe hurricane to impact this area directly since perhaps Hurricane Betsy in 1965. Damage was done to most of the homes and Church properties in the area of our diocese. Several parishes were forced out of their Churches and have to celebrate the liturgy in parish halls, parish school cafeterias, rectories or public recreation centers.

Nevertheless, we have found ways to continue to worship God through the sacraments, even if we have had to do so in a tent or in another structure that is not conducive to worship. Even if under inconvenient circumstances, we are re-engaging in parish activities. And we are thankful that we have been able to put aside some of the precautionary restrictions related to the pandemic, although we cannot totally let down our guard.

All of this reminds us that liturgy is not celebrated in an ideal vacuum, but in the midst of life’s messiness. We take that messiness with us to the liturgy, and the liturgy itself addresses the messiness. Even if our houses of worship are damaged, we see that the Church is really the People of God or Body of Christ. This is not to say that our Church buildings are unimportant and that they don’t need to be fixed. Quite the contrary, they facilitate our worship by creating a conducive worship space and standing as liturgical symbols in and of themselves. Those of us who are worshiping in damaged Churches or outside of the Churches altogether, look forward to the day when our buildings will be “healed.”

The lack of ideal conditions for our worship, however, need not prevent us from engaging in it. We will probably have to make adaptations. We may not be able to carry out our worship as we have done before. But we have to consider how we can offer God a fitting sacrifice of praise given the conditions with which we must cope.

The following liturgical pointers and suggestions will have to be considered in light of our particular situations, especially regarding worship space. Still we have to ask ourselves how we can give God our best.

There is a vast difference between decorating for Christmas, as we do in our homes, and creating liturgical environment. The creation of liturgical environment involves the placement of visible symbols which strive to convey the mystery being celebrated. The question to ask ourselves is, “How do the visible objects I put in the Church for the Christmas Season convey the mystery of Christmas. In order to do that we have to begin with the mystery itself. What is Christmas about? The light of God penetrating the darkness of human sin, incarnation, salvation, peace on earth, God’s Son becoming human so that we might become divine (the “holy exchange”), the coming of the Messiah, restoration of unity to all creation,(Preface of Christmas III), etc. What in the visible displays we create will convey these concepts?

Care should be taken in creating liturgical environment for Christmas that the focal points of liturgical activity (the altar, the ambo and the presider’s chair) are not overwhelmed by the decor in the sanctuary. Also, it is important not to impede easy passage through the sanctuary.

Celebration of the Sacrament of Penance during Advent

Although Advent is not a penitential season in the sense that Lent is, one aspect of our preparation for Christ’s return and our celebration of his first coming is repentance, even as John the Baptist exhorts us on the 2nd Sunday of Advent. Parishes may want to offer a Rite of
Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution.

“The Light Is On For You.”

On December 15, 2021 from 6:00 to 8:00 P.M. all parishes will offer the “Rite for the Reconciliation of Individual Penitents.”

Advent Prefaces

Preface I of Advent capture the twofold character of Advent, in that it mentions both comings of Christ and their interconnection. This preface is used exclusively from the First Sunday of Advent through December 16th.

Preface II of Advent. Even though the caption for the preface characterizes it as envisioning the “twofold expectation of Christ” the wording of it more precisely focuses our anticipation on the celebration of Christ’s first coming. However, the Thanksgiving of the preface connects the two comings in its final sentence when it articulates part of the cause of our gratitude as “already we rejoice at the mystery of his Nativity, so that he may find us watchful in prayer” [at his Second Coming]. This preface is used exclusively from December 17th-24th. It is not used prior to December 17th.

December 17-24

According to Universal Norms #41, “The weekdays from 17 December to 24 December inclusive serve to prepare more directly for the Lord’s birth.” A liturgical feature of these days is that, since the Middle Ages, the “O Antiphons” are sung. The antiphons reflect the anticipation of God’s definitive and progressive intervention to save his people by the use of titles for the Savior drawn from the Old Testament. The antiphons on each day of this period of Advent have the following order:

December 17: O Wisdom.
December 18: O Leader.
December 19: O Root of Jesse’s Stem.
December 20: O Key of David.
December 21: O Radiant Dawn.
December 23: O Emmanuel.

These antiphons have been preserved in the Gospel acclamations at Masses for these days and in the antiphons for the Magnificat in the Liturgy of the Hours for the same period.

It would be advisable to highlight the antiphons during this most proximate period of anticipation of our celebration of Christ’s first coming.

During this period from December 17-24, the hymn “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” is most appropriate, for its verses are based on the O Antiphons.

4th Sunday of Advent

This Sunday is nestled within the theological ambience of December 17-24. It is focused intensely on our anticipation of the celebration of Christ’s Nativity. However, the Collect for the Mass reflects the concept of the connection between Christ’s Nativity and his Passion as two events in a continuous act of salvation. The heart of every Mass is the Paschal Mystery. Even in the Christmas Masses we are mindful of the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ.

We want to be careful in our liturgical preparation to ensure that our focus on Christmas is still anticipatory and not actualized.

Reenactments: Never, at any time during the liturgies for Advent or Christmas, should there be any kind of “reenactment of the Christmas story” (as is sometimes done with children). It is important that the imparting of the Divine Word in these liturgical celebrations be offered in the form of the proclaimed Word of the Sacred Scriptures which carry our tradition. The form of the Scripture readings contained in the Lectionary is the only authorized form of communication of the Sacred Word of God during the liturgy. Moreover, such reenactments tend to harmonize the various traditions of the Evangelists and rob them of their uniqueness.

The Character of the Christmas Season

Next to the yearly celebration of the
Christmas as a Celebration of Divine Light

It is important that we celebrate Christmas as the fulfillment of Advent expectation and hope.

Celebrated near the Winter Solstice, the Christmas texts characterize the birth of Christ as a divine intervention whereby God’s salvific light dispels the darkness of hopelessness and sin. We see this especially in the Collects for the Masses During the Night and at Dawn.

Although not mentioned specifically in the Collect for Mass during the Day, the concept of the intervening Divine Light is found in the Gospel reading from John’s Prologue. “What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:3b-5).

With that said, it is important to note that Christmas is a Christological feast. Each Mass, with its prayers and readings, is meant to make a theological statement about the person of Jesus Christ. Even the warm narrative of Christ’s birth in Luke 2:1-14 (Mass during the Night) is not about “baby Jesus,” but about who Jesus is according to Luke: the universal Savior and heir to David’s throne.

Eucharistic Prayer during the Masses of Christmas and Its Octave: Any of the 4 common Eucharistic Prayers may be used for the Christmas Masses. However, Eucharistic Prayer I is especially pertinent to the liturgical celebrations of Christmas and its octave in that it contains a special form of the Communicantes for Christmas.

Which Readings May Be Used at Christmas Masses?

According to the rubrics in the Lectionary under the title “At the Vigil Mass” (for Christmas):

At the Vigil Mass only the readings assigned to that Mass in the Lectionary may be used.

At Mass during the Night, Mass at Dawn and Mass during the Day any of the four sets of readings (those of the Vigil and the three assigned to the various Masses on Christmas Day) may be used.

The Anticipated (Vigil) Mass

The Anticipated Mass of Christmas theologically stands on the threshold between Advent and Christmas.

The Collect recalls the Advent expectation of the coming of the Redeemer in the form of God’s Only Begotten Son.

It also recalls the anticipation of Christ’s Second Coming when it prays that as we welcome our Redeemer we will also “merit to face him confidently when he comes as our judge.”

The Gospel reading for this Mass gives the presider a choice of a long form (including the Matthean genealogy) or a short form (which limits the reading to the narrative of Joseph’s struggle and then faithful decision to complete his marriage contract with Mary).

The Matthean Genealogy (1:1-17) depicts Jesus as the fulfillment of Jewish regal Messianic expectation and reflects God’s gradually unfolding plan of salvation, which culminates in Jesus.

Jesus is once again depicted in the context of salvation history in the second reading. Paul builds up to the significance of Jesus by recalling the patriarchs (who were called by God) the Exodus, the rise of the monarchy under Saul, and the solidification of the nation under David, who deposed Saul. Jesus’ birth, life, death and resurrection represent God’s definitive act in his unfolding plan. Ultimately, Jesus is the savior.

While participation in the Vigil fulfills one’s obligation for the Solemnity of the Nativity, it is important to remember that this Mass actually anticipates the celebration of Christmas. Consider the Gospel acclamation: “Tomorrow the wickedness of the earth will be destroyed: the Savior of the world will reign over us.”

Mass during the Night

In the past this Mass was traditionally called “Midnight Mass,” and, as many of us remember, was actually celebrated at midnight on Christmas morning.

Recently it has been the practice, in many parishes and even in Rome, to celebrate this Mass during the night on Christmas Eve. When should this Mass be celebrated? First, the third edition of the Roman Missal in English translates the title of the Mass more precisely from the Latin as “Mass during the Night.” Secondly, there is no specific liturgical law which requires that the Mass be celebrated during the night on the morning of December 25th. Thirdly, I offer the following reflection from Liturgy Training Publications’ Pastoral Liturgy (http://www.pastoralliturgy.org/resources/0709TimingMidnightMass.php):

“Which one is ‘Midnight Mass,’” then, and does it matter if a Mass is at midnight? Not really. The formulary is called Mass “during the night,” not “at midnight.” If celebrating at 10:30 or 11 p.m. meets pastoral need (like the needs of families for a more reasonable hour), as long as such pastoral need is genuine, it can be a reasonable decision. However, it at least needs to be during the night, and late enough that one can see it as genuinely beginning the celebration of Christmas Day.”

Chanting the Nativity of the Lord from the Roman Martyrology (Appendix I of the
Characterization of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is radiant light, and His birth is light in the darkness of the world, in whose original creation He had a role that was manifest in the Incarnation. The enfleshment of the Divine, Preexistent Word of God, who is the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy.

The Gospel reading from Luke, with its tender images of an infant humbly swaddled and laid in a manger and shepherds receiving a nocturnal divine revelation, aims to convey much more than a heartwarming scene. Jesus will be spiritual food for those wise enough to learn how God will feed them through Jesus. Isaiah (1:3) characterizes Judah as being less insightful than oxen and asses. At least these animals know that their master’s manger provides food for their sustenance, but Israel in Isaiah’s day did not seek spiritual nourishment from Israel’s God. Swaddled as was King Solomon, Jesus is depicted as another wise Solomon, indeed as Wisdom incarnate (see Luke 7:35). The shepherds do not necessarily symbolize the poor, but sinners, since they had a reputation for not being the most honest of people. In defense of his call of Levi the tax collector, Luke’s Jesus will assert that he has come to call not the righteous, but sinners (5:27-32).

If Jesus is compared to King Solomon in the Gospel reading, the first reading points to a king who would establish justice and put an end to war. This king’s birth is light in the darkness of the miseries of slavery and military battles. Isaiah does not identify the king, but many commentators see Isaiah 9:1-6 as a prophecy of the emergence of Hezekiah, who undid many of his father’s (Ahaz’) misdeeds and sought to return Judah to fidelity to the Lord. For Christians, Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy.

Pastoral Note: Unfortunately, this text, though valuable as a text from ancient Christian tradition, uses a pre-critical chronology of events.

The Christmas “Nativity Scene”

Where is it to be placed? “If the manger is set up in the church, it must not be placed in the presbyterium. A place should be chosen that is suitable for prayer and devotion and is easily accessible by the faithful” (Book of

Roman Missal: This chant (or recitation of it) may be used before Mass during the Night is begun. It may not replace any part of the Mass.

Masses on Christmas Day

On Christmas Day the Roman Missal and Lectionary provide texts for two more Masses: one at dawn and one “during the day.”

Mass at Dawn: The Collect carries forward the theme of “light” from the Mass during the Night. Jesus Christ is radiant light, which, as we can see from the next clause in the paragraph, is a metaphor for mental enlightenment.

In the Gospel reading the shepherds are significant players. They receive the divine message from the angel, verify what they are told by viewing the newborn child and then announce what “they had heard and seen” (Luke 2:20).

The first reading (Isaiah 62:11-12) addresses the people’s difficulties in reestablishing themselves during the early post-exilic period. God will manifest himself as Savior, and the indignity that Israel suffered during the exile will be replaced with positive characterizations of them. In Jesus’ birth, God begins the process of our restoration.

Titus 3:4-7 was probably chosen as a Christmas Day text because it mentions the appearance of “the kindness and generous love of God our savior.” “Appearance,” of course, is a key Christmas word, inasmuch as God and everything about him is manifested in the birth of his Son. But the epiphany depicted here has to do with God. However, Jesus Christ is the visible manifestation of God’s saving and merciful activity.

Mass during the Day: The Gospel reading for Mass during the Day is the earliest Gospel reading we know of which was assigned to a Mass for the Nativity of the Lord. Taken together with the Collect of the Mass, the Johannine Prologue characterizes this celebration as one of the Incarnation. The enfleshment of the Divine, Preexistent Word of God, who is light that dispels a powerful darkness, is also the source of a new creation of the world, in whose original creation he had a part.

Hebrews 1:1-6 depicts Jesus as the visible manifestation of God’s creative and salvific word. The author compares the definitive word spoken in the Christ event to the provisional words of the prophets. The author abruptly moves from the image of Christ just mentioned to his redemptive mission, described in priestly terms as “purification.” Having accomplished this purpose, he takes his “seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” Again, we have a cultic image here of the high priest entering the Holy of Holies to fulfill his priestly obligations. The author may have in mind a passage such as Isaiah 55:10-11: “Yet just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down And do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, Giving seed to the one who sows and bread to the one who eats, So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; It shall not return to me empty, but shall do what please me, achieving the end for which I sent it.”

Masses on Christmas Afternoon

From mid to late morning until 11:59 PM on December 25, 2021 the Mass to be celebrated is that of Christmas Mass during the Day. Both Christmas and the next day, Sunday, are days of precept. However, since the solemnity of Christmas outranks the Feast of the Holy Family (on Sunday, December 26th) Masses during the afternoon and evening of Christmas Day are those of Christmas.

The Christmas “Nativity Scene”

[Image of Christmas Nativity Scene]
Blessings # 1544).

When is it to be blessed? “The Blessing of the Christmas manger or nativity scene, according to pastoral circumstances, may take place on the Vigil of Christmas or at another more suitable time.” The Ordo specifies “a more suitable time” as “during another service, e.g., a service of lessons and carols” or during a celebration of the word of God.

Feast of the Holy Family

Pope Saint John Paul II, in a homily dated Sunday, 31 December 1978 reflects on the Holy Family as follows:

“The family of Nazareth, which the Church, especially in today’s liturgy, puts before the eyes of all families, really constitutes that culminating point of reference for the holiness of every human family. The history of this Family is described very concisely in the pages of the Gospel. We get to know only a few events in its life. However what we learn is sufficient to be able to involve the fundamental moments in the life of every family, and to show that dimension, to which all men who live a family life are called: fathers, mothers, parents, children, The Gospel shows us, very clearly, the educative aspect of the family. ‘He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them’ (Lk 2:51).”

Choice of Readings: The Lectionary provides a set of readings to be used for Cycle C (the current liturgical cycle), but the first reading, responsorial psalm and second reading from Cycle A may be used in any year.

Fulfillment of Mass Obligation: Catholics who participate in Masses beginning at 4:00 PM and later on Christmas Day may fulfill their obligation for Sunday, December 26th, even if the Mass being celebrated is a Mass for the solemnity of Christmas.

Choice of Mass: While there is only one set of readings for this solemnity, the Roman Missal provides a specific set of prayers for an anticipated (vigil) Mass.

Eucharistic Prayer: As is the case with Christmas, a special form of the Communicantes for the Epiphany is included in Eucharistic Prayer I. Eucharistic Prayers II-IV, however, may be used.

Proclamation: In Appendix I of the Roman Missal is “The Announcement of Easter and the Moveable Feasts.” In accord with ancient tradition, this proclamation may be used at Mass on the Solemnity of the Epiphany. It may be done either after the Gospel reading or within the context of the homily and, if used, it is chanted by a deacon or cantor.

Wait, Don’t Take Down the Christmas Decorations and Stop Singing Christmas Carols Just Yet!: Perhaps since in the liturgical calendar prior to its reform at Vatican II Epiphany marked the end of the Christmas season there is a temptation to stop celebrating the Christmas season. However, the liturgy should look and sound like Christmas through the feast of the Lord’s Baptism.

Universal vs. Particular Calendars: In the Ecclesiastical Province of Louisiana Our Lady of Prompt Succor (January 8, 2022) is elevated to a solemnity, inasmuch as, under this title, Our Lady is the patroness of the State of Louisiana. The solemnity in the particular calendar, then, takes precedence over the universal calendar for January 8th, which in 2022 is Saturday after Epiphany.

Masses for the Day: Until 4:00 PM on Saturday, January 8, 2022, Mass may be taken from the Proper or Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary, especially no. III, or from the Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary #42, “Our Lady, Help of Christians.

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

Date: Traditionally situated on January 6th, in the United States the solemnity is commuted to the Sunday between January 1 and the Feast of the Lord’s Baptism.

Culmination of the Christmas Season: the Christmas season ends with vespers on the afternoon of January 9, 2022, the Feast of the Lord’s Baptism. This feast marks the transition between our worship in the context of the Christmas mystery and our liturgical encounter of Jesus Christ in his public ministry.

The Gospel reading for this feast in Cycle...
C is Luke 3:15-16, 21-22. Verses 15-18 provide a transition from the ministry of John the Baptist to that of Jesus. “All” wondered if John were not the Messiah. John does not answer the question directly, but focuses on what he thinks is more important that the crowd should realize. His practice of baptism is a preparatory cleansing for the coming of the one who will effect true spiritual transformation. He will baptize them with the Holy Spirit. This is where Luke’s (and Matthew’s as well) following of Mark ends. After “Holy Spirit,” Luke and Matthew add “and with fire,” and continue to describe the coming one’s work of sifting the “wheat from the chaff” (Luke 3:17-20, left out of the Lectionary) that is, the responsive from the non-responsive to Jesus call to conversion. In the context of Luke’s Gospel, the addition of “and with fire” to baptism by means of the Holy Spirit points to the gift of the Spirit in Acts (see 2:3-4), wherein the Spirit comes in the form of tongues of fire. Luke alone (3:21) mentions that Jesus is praying while being baptized. Prayer is an important Lucan theme; Luke often depicts Jesus at prayer. And he engages in prayer before big decisions, such as the choice of the 12 or divine revelations. Here, Jesus is in prayerful communion with the Father as the Holy Spirit descends upon him. In 4:16-20, Jesus will describe his prophetic ministry to the needy and outcast as being the result of the Spirit of God being upon him, in fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1-3. In Luke-Acts, the Holy Spirit empowers and guides both the missions of Jesus and of the Church.

ORDINARY TIME BEFORE LENT

Ordinary Time, and especially the Sundays within it are “devoted to the mystery of Christ in all its aspects” (General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar #43). Inasmuch as the liturgical year affords the faithful an opportunity to celebrate Christ’s saving work in sacred memory, during the Sundays of Ordinary Time the faithful encounter Christ in his public ministry as recounted in the Gospels.

Some Ideas for Liturgical Environment and Art

Ordinary Time after the heavy decorations: A much needed restful period, a crisp, clean, breathing environment provides a necessary contrast. During the winter months the use of Camellias, that appear in late winter to early spring have blooms in reds, whites, pinks, purples, and variegated colors. Beautiful Japanese Magnolias placed in arrangements or perhaps used as floating elements in glass water trays or bowls would have a peaceful, quiet, feel. Potted greens, such as Foxtail Fern, Asparagus Fern, and Norfolk pines, serve as shade backdrops for floral arrangements.

Attention should be given as to whether the different textures work well together when creating the environment. Experimenting with the shades of color and texture of the plants and flowers will help to create a visually pleasing placement. Simple and clean; it will be effective and appreciated at this time of the year.

–Jenny Authement

Notable Celebrations

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This observance occurs every year from January 18-25. Sometime during these days, except on Sunday or January 25th you may want to use MVNO #17: For the Unity of Christians.

Feast of St. Francis de Sales, Bishop and Doctor of the Church, Principal Patron of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodeaux (January 24, 2022).

National Observance of the Birth of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr (January 17, 2022). On September 18, 1964 Dr. King was received by Pope St. Paul VI. According to a New York Times article (https://www.nytimes.com/1964/09/19/archives/pope-and-dr-king-confer-on-rights-pontiff-quoted-as-backing-negro.html) on September 19, 1964, the pontiff “made it palpably clear that he is a friend of the Negro [sic] people, and asked me [King] to tell the American Negroes that he is committed to the cause of civil rights in the United States. Quoting the Pontiff as advocating nonviolent methods in the struggle for Negro rights, Dr. King said he was deeply encouraged by his meeting with Pope Paul.”

Ecumenically, Catholicism shares in common with Dr. King’s movement non-violent resistance of social injustice, as well as the promotion of racial harmony.

On January 17th, you may want to use the Mass for Promoting Harmony (#15 under Masses for Various Needs and Occasions). Readings may be taken from Volume IV of the Lectionary for Masses for Peace and Justice.

Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children. Saturday, January 22, 2022, anniversary of the Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion. The USCCB calls for a national day of prayer for the respect for the dignity of human life, especially for the unborn. Until 4:00 PM, you may want to use MVNO #48: For Giving Thanks for the Gift of Human Life, or #30A: For the Preservation of Peace and Justice. Readings may be chosen from Volume IV of the Lectionary for Masses for Peace and Justice #887-890.

Notable Celebrations

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Feast of St. Francis de Sales, Bishop and Doctor of the Church, Principal Patron of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodeaux (January 24, 2022).
This day is elevated to the rank of feast in the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux. Prayers from the proper are to be used. Also, readings may be taken from the proper in the Lectionary (§518) or from §§725-730 (Common of Doctors of the Church). You may want to include intercessions for authors and journalists, those who are deaf, the Diocese and the Strategic Plan.

Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. February 2, 2022. This celebration calls for a blessing of candles, which the faithful may bring from their homes. In addition, you may want to bless the candles you have on hand for liturgical use, including those you will use for the blessing of throats on the memorial of St. Blase. In its fullest form, the blessing of the candles is done at a location outside of the Church, and is followed by a procession into the Church.

World Day for Consecrated Life

This celebration is also observed on February 2nd, the Feast of the Presentation. Its purpose is to help the entire Church to esteem ever more greatly the witness of those persons who have chosen to follow Christ by means of the practice of the evangelical counsels as well as to be a suitable occasion for consecrated persons to renew their commitment and rekindle the fervor which should inspire their offering of themselves to the Lord.

Memorial of St. Blase, Bishop and Martyr. February 3, 2022. The blessing of throats may be done at Mass following the homily and Universal Prayer, or, for pastoral reasons, may take the place of the final blessing of the Mass. Outside of Mass it is preceded by a brief celebration of the Word. The rite of blessing is found in the Book of Blessings §§1622-1655. If, for pastoral reasons, the blessing cannot be done in the usual manner (saying the prayer of blessing while holding candles to the throat of the person and making the sign of the cross over them), a priest or deacon may give the blessing to a congregation while extending his hands over them. If a lay person gives the blessing, he or she may pronounce the formula of blessing without making the sign of the cross over the person.

World Day of the Sick.

Pope St. John Paul II designated the memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes (February 11) as the World Day of the Sick, “a special time of prayer and sharing, of offering one’s suffering for the good of the Church and of reminding everyone to see in his sick brother or sister the face of Christ who, by suffering, dying and rising, achieved the salvation of mankind” (Letter Instituting the World Day of the Sick, 13 May 1992, n. 3). On this day, MVNO #45 (“For the Sick”) would be appropriate. You may want to include intercessions during the Universal Prayer as follows: 1) For comfort and peace of mind and heart for the sick, 2) For physical healing, 3) For renewed strength for those of advanced age, 4) For all who care for the sick.

If you wish to celebrate the Rite of Anointing of the Sick within Mass either on February 11 or on the preceding weekend a proper explanation as to who is a candidate for the sacrament should be given. According to the New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law (Paulist Press, 2000), “On the one hand, the sacrament may and should be given to anyone whose health is seriously impaired; on the other hand, it may not be given indiscriminately or to any person whose health is not seriously impaired.” Ordinary illnesses in which a person’s health is not seriously impaired do not qualify a person for the sacrament. “Old people may be anointed if they are in weak condition, although no dangerous illness is present” (Rite of Anointing and Pastoral Care of the Sick, Praenotanda #11). Sick children must have reached the age of reason to be anointed (ibid., #12). People facing surgery may be anointed (ibid., #10). Also, a clear distinction should be drawn between sacramental anointing and non-sacramental anointing, which is sometimes practiced during “healing” services.

When the Mass for the Sick is prohibited (as it would be if you celebrated the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick on Sunday) you may choose one reading from Lectionary §§871-873 (Rite of Anointing During Mass #81). If you are considering celebrating the Rite of Anointing on Sunday but are also considering celebrating World Marriage Day, you might not want to do both.

World Marriage Day (Second Sunday of February (February 13, 2022). You may want to use the Order of Blessing a Married Couple within Mass (not on the anniversary of marriage) #107-114. The rite is designed for one couple, so if you are using it for multiple couples you will have to make some changes, e.g. “Look with favor on N. and N,” would become “…on these married couples.” USCCB has a webpage with some resources for National Marriage Week.

Anniversary of the Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Shelton Fabre (February 28, 2022)

For Bishop Fabre’s anniversary, Mass #3 (For the Bishop) under Masses for Holy Church would be appropriate, as would be Eucharistic Prayer I for Various Needs and Occasions.