EASTER SEASON 2021

The Easter Season

The fifty days from Easter Sunday to Pentecost are celebrated in joyful exultation as one feast day, or better as one "great Sunday."

These above all others are the days for the singing of the Alleluia.

The Sundays of this season rank as the paschal Sundays and, after Easter Sunday itself, are called the Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Sundays of Easter. The period of fifty sacred days ends on Pentecost Sunday (Universal Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar #22-24).

Pandemic and Easter 2021

Even if the pandemic continues to affect our celebration of the liturgy, at least we are not having to answer questions this year such as, “How do I celebrate the Triduum without a congregation?” Last year the entirety of the Easter season took place during phase 1. In our diocese that meant that we were celebrating weekend Masses with only a presider and a deacon or 1 lay person. Many parishes began livestreaming Masses to reach their parishioners, who were not able to be present at Mass in person. Many Confirmation and First Communion Liturgies were postponed to a later date, and even then we did not fully know that those liturgies would be able to happen. We had to suspend distribution of the Precious Blood at Mass. In addition, having had to remove holy water from the fonts at Church entrances or from a central font at the entrance of the nave of the Church, we were deprived of the opportunity to recall our baptism, the sacrament whereby we entered into life in Christ.

We are still dealing with limitations this year. The restriction on the distribution of the Cup and the absence of holy water in fonts continues. State law permits us to fill our Churches up to 75% of capacity, yet the perduing social distancing requirements prevent us from reaching that number in any given weekend Mass. We still have to wear masks, use hand sanitizer and have our Churches cleansed after every liturgy.

Nevertheless, we are able to celebrate Masses with a congregation with appropriate distinction given to the liturgical seasons. Even with necessary adaptations for social distancing, First Communions, Confirmations and the Christian initiation of adults are happening.

While every liturgy is a celebration of the paschal mystery, the Triduum and Easter Season remind us of it more vividly. The core reality of life is the paschal mystery. Life is a continuing experience of dying and rising. This is no less true in our experience of the pandemic, which has caused us to suffer different kinds of “death.” All of the restrictions put on our lives, socialization, work and recreational activities, the loss of one’s livelihood, dealing with illness, whether that be our own or that of loved ones, are all examples of dying we have experienced during the pandemic. Yet the fact that we are able to celebrate the liturgy at all, and that we have been moved to seek greater depths in faith and prayer are examples of the ways we have experienced resurrection in the midst of pandemic death. By the time we get to the Easter Season we will have walked the journey of suffering, death and resurrection with Jesus. The Easter Season is our celebration of Christ’s triumph over the forces of sin, evil and death. The healings and resuscitations Jesus performs in the Gospels reflect his power over these deficiencies and point toward his ultimate victory. As we celebrate that triumph in the Easter Season we do so with confidence. He has overcome the power of illness and we can hope that we will rise out of this pandemic.

Sprinkling Rite

At the Easter Vigil and on Easter Sunday the people are sprinkled after renewing their baptismal promises. “On Sundays, even in Masses anticipated on Saturday evenings, especially in Easter Time, instead of the customary Penitential Act, the blessing and sprinkling of water may take place (as found in the Roman Missal, Appendix, II, Rite for the Blessing and Sprinkling of Water), as a reminder of Baptism” (Ordo, s. v. Second Sunday of Easter or Divine Mercy Sunday). The prayer over the water to be blessed “During Easter Time” is to be used. If you blessed water at the Easter Vigil and you use this water to sprinkle the people, use the “Blessing of Water and Invocation of God over the Water” in #222-224 of the revised Order of Baptism of Children Otherwise, RCIA #222 D has an “Easter-Season Thanksgiving over Water Already Blessed.” If you have no neophytes (new initiates) simply leave out the specific names where these are called for.

Paschal Candle

The Paschal Candle is placed next to the ambo or in the middle of the sanctuary during the Easter Season and is lit for all liturgies through Pentecost, inclusive.

Liturgical Music during the Easter Season

Very often I notice in parishes that maybe even as early as the Third Sunday of Easter music ministers cease to use Easter hymns. To reinforce the continuity of the Great 50 Days, Easter hymns, such as “Jesus Christ Is Risen
Today,” “Alleluia, the Strife Is O’er,” “Easter Alleluia,” or any hymns for that matter which speak of the Lord’s resurrection as victory over sin and death are appropriate throughout the Easter Season. As was mentioned above, May is considered in popular piety the “Month of the Blessed Mother. For the first 3 weeks, we will still be within the Easter Season. Marian hymns are not appropriate during the liturgies of the Easter Season except when Marian memorials occur during this time, and unless they make some specific reference to the Lord’s resurrection (e. g., “Regina Coeli/O Queen of Heaven,” Gather Comprehensive #447, or “Sing We of the Blessed Mother” especially verse 3, Gather Comprehensive #786).

In addition, the Ordo (based on GIRM #63) instructs, “During the Easter Season, the refrain for the Responsorial Psalm may be ‘Alleluia,’ preferably sung (two or three times). When ‘Alleluia’ is sung as the Psalm refrain, the Gospel Acclamation and its verse may be omitted.”

It is common to do ”May Crownings” on or near the Mother’s Day weekend. It would be acceptable to have a May Crowning procession before Mass begins and a Marian hymn sung at that time.

COVID-19 Guidelines: any “procession” to crown an image of the Blessed Mother must observe social distancing guidelines. For example, there should not be multiple children carrying flowers in a group processing up to the image of the BVM. Participants in the procession should be reduced to 2 or 3 (including the child who bears the crown) at most.

Liturgical Environment during the Easter Season

In the section on liturgical music above we might have asked the question, “Do the final weeks of the Easter Season still sound like Easter?” We could equally ask the question, “do the final weeks of the Easter Season still look like Easter?” Again, continuity is important. As with the Easter hymns, Easter decor often fades out over the course of the season. There are many options for Easter decor. Easter Lilies are probably the most popular, but spring flowers and pastel-colored plants, such as hydrangea may also be used. Peace Lilies are also a good option. The white blossom reflects the Easter color, and the plants are more durable than the other types of Easter flowers. Perhaps it would be a good idea to include Peace Lilies among your Easter Lilies or spring flowers for the Easter weekend, so that even though the flowers will die out, the Peace Lilies can help maintain some continuity. As the season wears on, however, and you have to take the flowers out, it is important that the plants still look abundant for the entire season.

A number of parishes install flowing water fonts in their sanctuaries during the Easter Season.

Solemn Blessing

A special form of the solemn blessing for the Easter Season (#6) is included in the Roman Missal.

Dismissal

At the Easter Vigil and on Easter Sunday there is a special form of the dismissal with a double “alleluia,” which is sung or said. Outside of the Easter weekend and its octave, this form of the dismissal is used only on Pentecost Sunday and its vigil. It is not used at any other time during the Easter Season.

Maintaining Continuity during the Easter Season

The mention above that the Easter Season is “one great Sunday” implies that there is a need to maintain continuity in all aspects of liturgy during the Easter Season. Challenges to this observance come from within as well as from without. As in the case with Christmas, secular society anticipates Easter (as what I do not know! A spring festival?) and then moves on to the next holiday. Usually Mother’s Day, which although it is a meaningful secular observance, occurs during the Easter Season and may pose a challenge to maintain our focus on Easter. Below I will discuss how Mother’s Day can be observed in the liturgy.

Also, while popular devotions, such as those which are related to the notion that May is the “Month of the Blessed Mother,” are observed, it is important that the liturgy continue to reflect strongly the Easter season.

Scripture Readings on Sundays of the Easter Season

“The Gospel readings for the first three Sundays recount the appearances of the risen Christ. The readings about the Good Shepherd are assigned to the Fourth Sunday. On the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Sundays, there are excerpts from the Lord’s discourse at the Last Supper.

The first reading is from the Acts of the Apostles, in a three-year cycle of parallel and progressive selections: material is presented on the life of the early Church, its witness, and its growth. For the reading from the Apostles… the First Letter of John [is read] in Year B…” (General Introduction to the Lectionary #100).

Easter Sunday Readings

While the primary text given for the Easter Sunday Gospel reading is John 20:1-9, the Gospel from the current year’s Easter Vigil (Mark 16:1-7) may be read. At a Mass celebrated in the evening Luke 24:13-35 may be used.

In John 20:1-9 Peter and “the disciple whom Jesus loved” run to Jesus’ tomb after the frantic report from Mary Magdalene that the Lord’s body is missing. The detail that the beloved disciple, who arrived at the tomb first, enters the tomb after Peter throws emphasis on the former’s reaction of faith. While Peter remains confused at this point, the beloved disciple “saw and believed.” The verb “to see” in John’s Gospel often refers to spiritual insight. Not only is the man born blind healed so that he can physically see Jesus, he also comes to faith in him as the Son of Man. To say that the beloved disciple “saw and believed” when he peered into the empty tomb is to say that he understands that Jesus’ body is absent.
because the Lord is risen.

Two options are given for the second reading, Colossians 3:1-4 or 1 Corinthians 5:6b-8. In Colossians Christians die and rise with Christ in baptism, so that their lives are “hidden” in Christ. They live everyday human lives, but through baptism they have become immersed in the life Christ offers. If they are united to the heavenly Christ, their focus should be upon heavenly things.

In the 1 Corinthians reading, Paul draws on Deuteronomy 16:1-4, in which instructions are given for celebrating Passover. In particular, not only are the Israelites to eat unleavened bread for seven days, they are not even to have yeast in their territory during that time. Paul uses that Jewish practice of clearing out yeast to make a point about the conversion Christians should reflect in their lives. They should clear out all malice and wickedness in their lives and replace these with sincerity and truth. Used on Easter Sunday as this passage is, it is meant to provide us with an example of what it means to die and rise with Christ.

Octave of Easter

The first eight days of the Easter season mark the octave of Easter and are celebrated as solemnities of the Lord (Universal Norms #24). The Glory to God is recited or sung at all Masses during the Octave. The Gospel readings are those which recount appearances of the risen Lord to his disciples and their coming to faith in his resurrection. The Profession of Faith is not said except on Sunday of the Octave.

Funeral Masses are the only other Masses permitted during the Octave.

Sunday. As part of the Octave and as a Sunday in the Easter season the 2nd Sunday of Easter is an extension of the celebration of Easter the weekend before.

In 2000 Pope St. John Paul II declared that on the 2nd Sunday of Easter, Divine Mercy Sunday could also be observed. Any Divine Mercy devotions are to be celebrated outside of the context of Mass, although an intercession related to the theme of Divine Mercy might be included in the Universal Prayer at Masses on the weekend.

The Gospel reading is the Johannine account of the risen Lord’s first appearance to the group of disciples huddled behind locked doors. The disciples who are present react with joy, and Jesus imparts the Holy Spirit to them. In doing so he who was described in the Prologue as collaborating with God in the creation of the world, now makes of these disciples a new creation through the gift of the Spirit. They in turn are empowered to collaborate in the recreation of the world through their proclamation of forgiveness of sins.

The next scene is probably more memorable to us as the “Doubting Thomas” episode. Thomas’ doubt is really a foil for the expression of faith he will make when he declares Jesus “Lord and God.” This is the greatest statement of faith any character in John’s Gospel makes. John presents Jesus as pronouncing a beatitude on those who believe without seeing, people such as his implied reader and people such as us. In this way, John connects anyone who comes to faith by reading his Gospel with the initial witnesses to Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances.

In the selection from 1 John for this Sunday, the author articulates Jesus’ identity as Messiah and Son of God. To believe in Jesus as such is to obey one of the commandments the Johannine Jesus gives his disciples. To love is the second commandment Jesus gives in John’s Gospel; here he specifically talks about love for God and God’s Son. He goes on to say that love for God consists in observing Jesus’ 2 commandments. In John 13:34 and 15:12, Jesus commands the disciples to love one another. Thus to love others is to love God as well.

In John 16:33, Jesus announces that he has overcome the world. In the Prologue to the Gospel, John asserted that Jesus enabled all who believed in him to become God’s children. Now the author of 1 John explains that those begotten by God share in Jesus’ victory over “the world” (that part of society which is hostile to him) because they believe in Jesus’ divine Sonship.

The author of 1 John confirms his identification of Jesus by citing three witnesses: water, blood and the Spirit. “Water” and “blood” probably refer to the practice of the sacraments of baptism and eucharist in the Johannine community, sacraments by which they share in eternal life. The Spirit, of course, is the Spirit of Truth, which Jesus imparts to the disciples who believe in him.

Third Sunday of Easter

The scene of the Gospel for the Third Sunday of Easter is the Lucan account of Jesus’ appearance to the disciples in Jerusalem after his encounter with the two on the road to Emmaus. The story emphasizes the corporeality of the resurrection, especially in the risen Lord’s mention of his having “flesh and bones” and eating a piece of fish in their presence. As is typical in Luke’s theology, Jesus interprets his death and resurrection as the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. Flowing from his death and resurrection is the experience of forgiveness of sin for all people who come to believe that Jesus has brought salvation through the paschal mystery. People’s experience of salvation through faith will result from the disciples’ proclamation about Jesus from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. This passage pulls together the Scriptures, the salvific work of Jesus and the preaching ministry of the Church. We continue this ministry today.

The reading from 1 John for this Sunday speaks of Christ’s sacrifice as the means of expiation of our sins. This is an aspect of Christ’s death and resurrection. The author reminds his readers of this truth because, in the event that they do commit sin, they are not spiritually
doomed. Jesus has atoned for our sins. Jesus is an “advocate” with the Father. This means that we have a relationship to him and he to the Father, thus he is a mediator on our behalf. To “know” Jesus is to enjoy his advocacy. “Knowing” here is not intellectual knowledge about him, but interpersonal knowledge. Not to know Jesus is to fail to keep his commandments, to believe that he is the one sent by God and to love one another. The Author of 1 John chastises a group that has apparently seceded from the community for failing to believe that Jesus, as God’s Son, truly appeared in the flesh, and for not loving their brethren, the faction the author represents. An Easter “lesson” we can draw from this reading is that as risen Lord Jesus, who atoned for our sins, can continue to effect our reconciliation with the Father through our interpersonal knowledge of him (= an intimate relationship with him).

Fourth Sunday of Easter

In every cycle on the Fourth Sunday of Easter, selections are read from John 10, the section about Jesus as the Good Shepherd or the Sheepgate. This year’s selection (John 10:11-18) is the parable of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. The parable contains a reference to Jesus’ resurrection in that he claims to take up his life again after laying it down of his own accord; he is not a victim of his opponents. Also, this passage anticipates the risen Lord’s appointment of Peter as shepherd of his sheep (John 21:15-17) after his departure.

Perhaps adding something resembling a shepherd’s staff to the liturgical environment would help to convey the idea.

World Day of Prayer for Vocations to the Permanent Diaconate, the Priesthood and the Consecrated Life. This is a day to raise awareness of the need for vocations. A reference to this need can be made in the homily in the sense that those called to religious vocations must imitate the Good Shepherd. An intention for vocations should be included within the Universal Prayer.

Fifth and Sixth Sundays of Easter

“On the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Sundays, there are excerpts from the Lord’s discourse and prayer at the end of the Last Supper” (General Introduction to the Lectionary #100). In the context of the liturgy, however, we read these Gospel passages as parting words of the risen Lord to his disciples between his resurrection and ascension.

This year the Gospel reading for the Fifth Sunday (John 15:1-8) is Jesus’ parable about the Vine and the Branches. Ultimately Jesus uses this image to encourage his disciples to stay united to him in a spiritually intimate relationship. To remain in such a relationship is to be truly alive, and every benefit the disciples have derived from putting faith in Jesus will remain a part of them if they stay attached to him. If not, they can lose everything; like unattached branches they will wither and die.

On the Sixth Sunday Jesus encourages the disciples to remain in his love. They will do so if they keep his commandments of believing in him and loving one another. The greatest love is to lay down one’s life for the benefit of one that person loves. Jesus most perfectly exemplifies the pinnacle of love by offering himself as the Passover lamb to be slaughtered for the salvation of others. The disciples will lay down their lives for Jesus by surrendering themselves to an observance of his commandments. By doing so, they enter into a relationship of “friendship” with him. Their prior relationship was that of slaves. But now they have come to a point where they have been made privy to the message Jesus received from the Father, and that qualifies them as friends or “beloved ones” (philous). The initiative for the formation of this relationship lies with Jesus, who chose the disciples and not vice-versa. Because they are friends with God’s Son, they can submit their petitions to the Father.

Thursday, May 13, 2021 (Thursday of the Sixth Week of Easter)

“On the fortieth day after Easter the Ascension is celebrated, except in places where, not being a holyday of obligation, it has been transferred to the Seventh Sunday of Easter.

The weekdays after the Ascension until the Saturday before Pentecost inclusive are a preparation for the coming of the Holy Spirit” (Universal Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar #22-26).

In the ecclesiastical province of New Orleans, this day is not observed as Ascension Thursday.

Sunday, May 16, 2021 (Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord)

In the ecclesiastical province of New Orleans the Solemnity of the Ascension is transferred to the Seventh Sunday of Easter. Readings and prayers at the vigil and all Masses this weekend come from the Solemnity of the Ascension. Please note that the Mass has a proper vigil with proper prayers. Scripture readings are the same for both the vigil and the Mass of the Day. There are two possible second readings given for year B, and a shorter form of the second of the two
The nature of the Ascension is articulated in the two prefaces given for this solemnity. The first preface celebrates the kingship of Christ, especially in his functions as victor over sin and death, mediator between God and human beings, judge of the world and Lord of hosts. His ascension is not a distancing of him from his followers, rather he has blazed a trail that we might follow.

The second preface recalls and links three aspects of the Easter mystery prior to the sending of the Spirit, namely, Christ’s resurrection, post-resurrection appearances to disciples and his ascension. Christ accomplished all of this for the purpose of making us sharers in his divinity.

The Vigil Mass of Pentecost may be extended with multiple readings and prayers, as at the Easter Vigil. The extended Liturgy of the Word traces the role of the Holy Spirit, in union with the Father and the Son, in salvation history.

When Mass is begun in the usual way, after the Kyrie (Lord have mercy) the Priest says the 2nd option for the Collect as at the Vigil Mass. Then he introduces the extended Liturgy of the Word with the text given in #3 for Pentecost, At the Vigil Mass, or similar words.

The Liturgy of the Word then proceeds with 4 readings from the Old Testament, corresponding responsorial psalms and a prayer following each reading. In the Lectionary, Volume I, the Scripture readings may be found at §62, but the corresponding Responsorial Psalms are not. The Lectionary for Mass Supplement contains all the readings and responsorial psalms. The Glory to God is then sung. Afterward, the reader proclaims the epistle reading and Mass continues in the usual way.

At the Vigil Mass the Sequence is optional. If for pastoral reasons, however, the readings for Pentecost Sunday are used at the Vigil, the Sequence should be sung at the Vigil.

**Pentecost Sunday, May 23, 2021**

The Sequence is required at this celebration. One of two readings offered may be chosen for the second reading and Gospel Reading.

The Easter Season concludes with the completion of Evening Prayer II for Pentecost. The Paschal Candle is displayed with honor near the baptismal font.

**RCIA DURING THE EASTER SEASON**

For Neophytes the Easter Season is the formal period of Mystagogy. *Paschale Solemnitatis* #102 explains, “For adults who have received Christian initiation during the Easter Vigil, the whole of this period is given over to mystical catechesis. Therefore, wherever there are neophytes, the prescriptions of the Ordo initiationis Christianae adultorum, nn. 37–40 and 235–239, should be observed. Intercession should be made in the Eucharistic Prayer (I) for the newly baptized through the Easter octave in all places.”

RCIA #244 describes the period of Mystagogy as follows: “This is a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery and in making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist, and doing the works of charity.”

The heart of Mystagogy is reflection on the Sunday readings of the Easter Season as a means of coming to a deeper perception of their experience of sacramental initiation. In addition it is a time for them to connect with and integrate into the rest of the community and become part of the Church’s and local community’s mission.

In #103, *Paschale Solemnitatis* states that neophytes should come to Mass, preferably with their godparents, and a special place might be designated for them. Intercessions during the Easter Season should make mention of them and a special celebration should be held on or about Pentecost to conclude the formal period of Mystagogy.

It might be a nice idea not only to have the neophytes sit together, but to wear their baptismal garment when they come to Mass.

**Completion of Initiation of Baptized Candidates Who Are Adults or Children of Catechetical Age**

Sundays of the Easter Season are the most fitting time to complete the initiation of baptized candidates who are adults or children of catechetical age, as well as to admit those who require it to full communion with the Catholic Church.

**Precept to Receive Holy Communion during the Easter Season**

Pastors should remind the faithful of the requirement stated in canon 920 that all Catholics are to receive Holy Communion at least once a year and that this precept is to be fulfilled during the Easter Season, unless it is fulfilled for just cause at another time (*Paschale Solemnitatis* #104).

**OTHER NOTABLE CELEBRATIONS OCCURRING DURING THE EASTER SEASON**

Memorial of St. Joseph, the Worker (May 1, 2021)
This may be a good day to use the “Order for the Blessing of Tools or Other Equipment for Work” in the Book of Blessings, #919-941).

Day of Prayer for the Beginning of the Hurricane Season, Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux (May 8, 2021)

This day of prayer is observed in the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux. At Mass in the morning on this day the collect for “Fine Weather” (#36 under Masses for Civil Needs) could be used. Also intercessions for good weather and safety in the event of storms could be offered during the Universal Prayer.

Mother’s Day (May 9, 2021)

Secular U. S. society will observe Mother’s Day on the Sixth Sunday of Easter. The focus of this day is still on the Easter Season. The fact that it is Mother’s Day and that popular piety observes the month of May as “the month of the Blessed Mother” does not provide a reason to depart from the liturgy’s focus on Easter. However, we can acknowledge Mother’s Day by using the “Order for Blessing Mothers on Mother’s Day” in the Book of Blessings #1724-1728. Note that specific petitions pertaining to mothers are given in the order.

Obligatory Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church (May 24, 2021)

On February 11, 2018, the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments implemented Pope Francis’ decision that the day after Pentecost Sunday be observed in the general Roman Calendar as the Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church. This memorial is to take precedence over conflicting obligatory memorials.

Prayers for this Mass may be found in the Roman Missal under Votive Masses, #108: Our Lady, Mother of the Church.

Citations of the suggested Scripture readings can be found at https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year-and-calendar/mother-of-the-church

An option is given for the first reading, either Genesis 3:9-15, 20 (§707.1) or Acts 1:12-14 (§708.1), which can be found in volume IV of the Lectionary under Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Responsorial Psalm suggested is 87:1-3, 5-7. This exact setting is not found in the Lectionary, but a setting which adds verse 4 can be found at §280 or 456.

The Gospel reading suggested is John 19:25-34, which is not set in the Lectionary. The text is below:

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

After this, aware that everything was now finished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I thirst.” There was a vessel filled with common wine. So they put a sponge filled with wine on a sprig of hyssop and put it up to his mouth. When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, “It is finished.” And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit.

Now since it was preparation day, in order that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the sabbath, for the sabbath day of that week was a solemn one, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs be broken and that they be taken down. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and then of the other one who was crucified with Jesus.

But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs, but one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out.

The Gospel of the Lord

You can find this text within the Johannine Passion Narrative, read on Good Friday.

Optional Memorial of St. Paul VI, Pope (May 29, 2020)

Until proper texts are translated into English and recognitio is given them by the Holy See, the USCCB recommends the use of the following for St. Paul VI:
Suggested readings: 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23 (no. 722-4); Psalm 96:1-2a, 2b-3, 7-8a, 10 (no. 721-5); Matthew 16:13-19 (no. 724-2).

Monday, May 31, 2021 (Memorial Day), Feast of the Visitation

The United States observes Memorial Day, a day to pray for the salvation of souls of the deceased who died in battle or after having served in the military. This observance happens to fall on the Feast of the Visitation by Mary of Elizabeth. Besides ritual and funeral Masses, no other Mass is permitted on this day unless the Diocesan bishop directs the celebration of a different Mass or permits it. On this day and on the previous weekend the military dead may be mentioned in particular in a general intercession for all the dead in the Universal Prayer. Also, the “Order for Visiting a Cemetery” (Book of Blessings #1734-1754) may be used.

Saturday, June 5, 2021: Anniversary of the Dedication of St. Francis de Sales Cathedral and St. Joseph Co-Cathedral

This liturgical day is observed as a solemnity in the two cathedrals and as a feast in all other Churches of the diocese. Use the Mass from the Common of the Dedication of a Church (within the dedicated church or outside of it, as the case may be). Funeral Mass is only other Mass permitted. In the cathedrals, ritual Masses, such as those for Matrimony and Confirmation are not permitted. If one of these sacraments must be celebrated on this day, texts must be taken from the Mass for the Anniversary of the Dedication of a Church, Inside the Dedicated Church. This year this solemnity occurs outside of the Easter Season.

Reflection

Pope Francis
Excerpt from Urbi et Orbi Message Easter 2020

Dear brothers and sisters, Happy Easter!

Today the Church’s proclamation echoes throughout the world: “Jesus Christ is risen!” – “He is truly risen!”.

Like a new flame this Good News springs up in the night: the night of a world already faced with epochal challenges and now oppressed by a pandemic severely testing our whole human family. In this night, the Church’s voice rings out: “Christ, my hope, has arisen!” (Easter Sequence).

This is a different “contagion”, a message transmitted from heart to heart – for every human heart awaits this Good News. It is the contagion of hope: “Christ, my hope, is risen!” This is no magic formula that makes problems vanish. No, the resurrection of Christ is not that. Instead, it is the victory of love over the root of evil, a victory that does not “by-pass” suffering and death, but passes through them, opening a path in the abyss, transforming evil into good: this is the unique hallmark of the power of God.

The Risen Lord is also the Crucified One, not someone else. In his glorious body he bears indelible wounds: wounds that have become windows of hope. Let us turn our gaze to him that he may heal the wounds of an afflicted humanity.

Today my thoughts turn in the first place to the many who have been directly affected by the coronavirus: the sick, those who have died and family members who mourn the loss of their loved ones, to whom, in some cases, they were unable even to bid a final farewell. May the Lord of life welcome the departed into his kingdom and grant comfort and hope to those still suffering, especially the elderly and those who are alone. May he never withdraw his consolation and help from those who are especially vulnerable, such as persons who work in nursing homes, or live in barracks and prisons. For many, this is an Easter of solitude lived amid the sorrow and hardship that the pandemic is causing, from physical suffering to economic difficulties.

This disease has not only deprived us of human closeness, but also of the possibility of receiving in person the consolation that flows from the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist and Reconciliation. In many countries, it has not been possible to approach them, but the Lord has not left us alone! United in our prayer, we are convinced that he has laid his hand upon us (cf. Ps 138:5), firmly reassuring us: Do not be afraid, “I have risen and I am with you still!” (cf. Roman Missal, Entrance Antiphon, Mass of Easter Sunday).