

Mary, Mother of the Church (Newsletter, Committee on Divine Worship, USCCB, Vol LIV March 2018)

Fulfilling a request of Pope Francis, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued a decree dated February 11, 2018 (Prot. n. 10/18) that inscribes a new Obligatory Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, in the General Roman Calendar. The new celebration will be observed yearly on the Monday after Pentecost Sunday. The Congregation issued an additional notification on March 24, 2018 (Prot. n. 138/18) that clarified various aspects of the new memorial.

First taught by Saint Ambrose in the fourth century, the title of “Mother of the Church” for the Virgin Mary was proclaimed by Blessed Paul VI on November 21, 1964, at the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council’s third session. Since that time a devotional memorial to Mary has appeared on a number of proper religious, diocesan, and national calendars. To better focus the Church’s attention on the maternal care of the Blessed Mother for the disciples of Christ throughout the ages, Pope Francis has chosen to inscribe this memorial for the universal Church.

Robert Cardinal Sarah, Prefect of the Congregation, provided some spiritual reflections in a commentary accompanying the decree: “The water and blood which flowed from the heart of Christ on the Cross as a sign of the totality of his redemptive offering, continue to give life to the Church sacramentally through Baptism and the Eucharist. In this wonderful communion between the Redeemer and the redeemed, which always needs to be nourished, Blessed Mary has her maternal mission to carry out.” He also recounted the existing liturgical history of the celebration of Mary, Mother of the Church. In preparation for the Jubilee Year of 1975, her Votive Mass was approved in 1973 and inserted into the *Missale Romanum, editio typica altera*. Saint John Paul II added “Mother of the Church” to the Litany of Loreto in 1980, and during the Marian Year of 1987, a new *Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary* was issued, including two additional formularies for the Virgin Mary as “Image and Mother of the Church.” Cardinal Sarah’s commentary reminds the followers of Christ that “if we want to grow and to be filled with the love of God, it is necessary to plant our life firmly on three great realities: the Cross, the Eucharist, and the Mother of God. These are three mysteries that God gave to the world in order to structure, fructify, and sanctify our interior life and lead us to Jesus.”

Liturgical Texts

Enclosed with the Congregation’s decree was a set of liturgical texts in Latin: Mass rubrics, Lectionary citations, a new entry for the *Roman Martyrology*, and texts for the Liturgy of the Hours (biographical note, second reading for the Office of Readings, and Gospel canticle antiphons for Morning and Evening Prayer). The International Commission on English in the Liturgy will produce a base translation of these texts according to its usual procedures, and after canonical vote by the USCCB they will be submitted to the Holy See for confirmation. Thus, it will be some time before a definitive English text will be available in print. (The same process applies for Spanish translations, which the USCCB usually obtains from the Conference of the Mexican Episcopate or the Spanish Episcopal Conference.) Since the Holy See has indicated that the new celebration is to be observed already this year, the Secretariat of Divine Worship offers the following interim guidance on the celebration of this memorial:

Mass – The Mass formulary is taken from the *Roman Missal*, Votive Masses, no. 10B (“Our Lady, Mother of the Church”). It includes a Collect, Prayer over the Offerings, Preface, Prayer after Communion, and Entrance and Communion Antiphons. White vestments are worn.

Lectionary – Readings have been assigned for the new memorial; the Congregation stated in its March 24 notification that these readings are proper. The readings are: Genesis 3:9-15, 20 or Acts 1:12-14; Psalm 87:1-2, 3 and 5, 6-7; and John 19:25-34. These texts (and the Gospel acclamation) are very close to those assigned for the Votive Mass of the same name (*Lectionary*, no. 1002-I), but there are some slight differences. Therefore, the Secretariat has prepared a free PDF download of the readings, available at USCCB.org/motherofthechurch.

Liturgy of the Hours – The psalmody of the day is used. For the time being, the other elements are taken from either the Psalter of the day or the Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the concluding prayer at the Office of Readings, Morning Prayer, and Evening Prayer is the same as the Collect prayer from the *Roman Missal*:

O God, Father of mercies,
 whose Only Begotten Son, as he hung upon the Cross,
 chose the Blessed Virgin Mary, his Mother,
 to be our Mother also,
 grant, we pray, that with her loving help
 your Church may be more fruitful day by day
 and, exulting in the holiness of her children,
 may draw to her embrace all the families of the peoples.
 Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
 who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
 one God, for ever and ever.

Liturgical Calendar – The Congregation’s notification letter directed that the Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, be given preference when it coincides with another Obligatory Memorial (as it will in 2020 and 2028). In addition, there is no change to the post-Pentecost rubric in the *Roman Missal*, whereby the Pentecost Sunday Mass or a Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit may be said on the Monday or Tuesday after Pentecost if the faithful are obliged or accustomed to attend Mass. (No such obligation exists in the U.S. proper calendar, as it does on some other national calendars.) Although there is permission to celebrate a Votive Mass on Obligatory Memorials if “some real necessity or pastoral advantage calls for it” (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 376), it is preferred that the Mother of the Church celebration take place on its proper day.

Finally, the 2018 and 2019 editions of the *Liturgical Calendar for the Dioceses of the United States of America* are emended as follows:

May 2018	June 2019
<p>21 Mon The Blessed Virgin Mary, white Mother of the Church (Seventh Week in Ordinary Time) <i>Memorial</i> Gn 3:9-15, 20 or Acts 1:12-14/Jn 19:25-34 (572A, see www.USCCB.org/motherofthechurch) Pss III</p>	<p>10 Mon The Blessed Virgin Mary, white Mother of the Church (Tenth Week in Ordinary Time) <i>Memorial</i> Gn 3:9-15, 20 or Acts 1:12-14/Jn 19:25-34 (572A, see www.USCCB.org/motherofthechurch) Pss II</p>