

## Chapter IV: Christmastide through Candlemas

*"Christ, when for us you were baptized, God's Spirit on you came.  
Baptize us with your Spirit, Lord, your cross on us be signed,  
that likewise in God's service we may perfect freedom find."  
-Francis Bland Tucker*

### Christmastide

This season begins with the Vigil of Christmas and ends with the Second Vespers for the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. The inauguration of the fullness we await was at long last disclosed in the incarnation and birth of Jesus (Christmas), born of Mary (Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God), who became a part of the human family (Feast of the Holy Family), was manifested to the nations (Epiphany), and revealed as God's own beloved child (Baptism of the Lord). The Christmas season celebrates the appearance of God among us in the birth, epiphany, and baptism of the Lord Jesus: the beginning of our salvation in Christ.<sup>1</sup>

We are all made to be living temples of God. We are all created to be dwelling places of his glory. We are all fashioned in His image and likeness to be abodes of His presence. The first Christian martyr, the protodeacon Stephen whose memory is celebrated on [December 26], was killed for proclaiming this marvel when he bore witness that *"the Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands."* For this, like Jesus himself, he was accused of planning the destruction of the earthly temple at Jerusalem (Acts 7:48; 6:14). The apostle Paul proclaims this same doctrine clearly and without equivocation when he writes to the Corinthians and to us that *"we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building"* (1 Cor 3:9).<sup>2</sup>

#### **Paschal Context for Christmas Feasts**

Christmas does not merely celebrate the birth of a child, rather this great feast celebrates the incarnation (birth) of the Lord of history in our world as God's own Word in our very flesh. It is the beginning of the paschal mystery and inevitably leads to his saving passion and resurrection from the dead. The full cycle of Christmas feasts, as surely as the celebration of the Easter Triduum, proclaims that God's "eternal Word has taken upon himself our human weakness." (Preface of Christmas, III (P 5))

This is evident in the the Gospel infancy narratives which, rather than being merely stories about the birth of a child, are anticipations of the acceptance and rejection which Jesus would meet throughout his ministry and unto his very death. Therefore Christmas is as integral to an adult understanding of faith as is Easter. Just as the Easter Triduum is one three-day celebration of Christ's paschal mystery, so the very feasts of the Christmas season are themselves celebrations of that same mystery made manifest in human history from the first moment of Jesus' birth. It is especially

---

<sup>1</sup> National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States. *Lectionary for Masses with Children*, [hereafter LMC] Introduction, no. 42. given the *recognitio* from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. 27 May 1992.

<sup>2</sup> Fr. Thomas Hopko, *The Winter Pascha*, Chapter 4, "Temples of the Living God". St. Vladimir's Seminary Press.

appropriate that the celebration of Christmas be prolonged throughout the Christmas season, rather than anticipating it as is so common in secular culture.<sup>3</sup>

## The Christmas Lectionary<sup>4</sup>

### Sundays & Feasts

The Gospel on the Sunday within the Octave of Christmas, Feast of the Holy Family, is about Jesus' childhood and the other readings are about the virtues of family life. On the Octave Day of Christmas, Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, the readings are about the Virgin Mother of God and the giving of the holy Name of Jesus. On the second Sunday after Christmas, the readings are about the mystery of the Incarnation. On the Epiphany of the Lord, the Old Testament reading and the Gospel continue the Roman tradition; the text for the reading from the Letters of the Apostles is about the calling of the nations to salvation. On the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the texts chosen are about this mystery.

### Christmas Weekday Readings

From 29 December on, there is a continuous reading of the whole of the First Letter of John, which actually begins earlier, on 27 December, the Feast of St. John the Evangelist, and on 28 December, the Feast of the Holy Innocents. The Gospels relate manifestations of the Lord: events of Jesus' childhood from the Gospel of Luke (29-30 December); passages from the first chapter of the Gospel of John (31 December-5 January); other manifestations of the Lord from the four Gospels (7-12 January).

## Saints in the Christmas Octave - *The 'Comites Christi'*

These saints are called the *Comites Christi*, "the companions of Christ," and as that name implies, they are not only close to Him, but they have a certain nobility (the word *comes*, from which we get our word "count," also implies aristocracy). It is for these reasons, incidentally, that the Eastern churches honor the Apostles, Peter and Paul, on December 28.

Several saints' days fall within the Octave of Christmas are also a part of the "Twelve Days of Christmas." By placing their feasts near the birth of the Lord, the Church is suggesting that there is a special spiritual proximity as well. St. Stephen (December 26) is the "Proto-Martyr" the first follower of the Lord to be martyred.

Saint John (December 27) is the "beloved disciple" who rested on our Lord's bosom during the Last Supper.

And the Holy Innocents (December 28), those infant boys who suffered at the hands of Herod, are obviously connected in a special way to our Lord's infancy. In our own times, children suffer innumerable forms of violence which threaten their lives, dignity and right to education. Mindful of these specific problems, popular piety in many places has inspired acts of worship as well as displays of charity which provide assistance to pregnant mothers, encourage adoption and the promotion of the education of children.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> LMC, nos. 43-44.

<sup>4</sup> *Lectionary for Mass*, Introduction, nos. 95-96.

<sup>5</sup> DPPL, no. 113.

St. Thomas Becket (December 29), the Archbishop of Canterbury who was killed by the king's men in 1170 on this day, would have normally seen his feast transferred to a date outside the Octave of Christmas. However, because his martyrdom was such a shock and outrage to Christendom, the Roman authorities deemed it appropriate to leave his "spiritual birthday" exactly where it was, thereby adding him to the list of Christ's nobility.

The final *comes Christi* is St. Sylvester I (December 31), the great pope who lived to see the Roman persecutions of the Church finally end during the reign of Emperor Constantine. It is therefore appropriate to honor this saint within the Octave that celebrates "peace on earth," especially on the day before the new civic year.

## December 27 - Saint John's Day - Blessing of Wine

Wine is traditionally blessed on St. John's Day in remembrance of the legend that St. John safely drank poisoned wine offered to him by his enemy after he had blessed it. It is also an act of reconciliation to share a cup of wine with an 'enemy' on this day. It was on this day in 1983 that Pope John Paul II visited Mehmet Ali Agca (the man who had shot him two years earlier) in prison and shared a cup of wine with him. The ritual below is taken from the *Book of Blessings*, numbers 1781-ff.

### "Blessing of Food or Drink or Other Elements Connected with Devotion"

1781 On the occasion of a feast or season of the liturgical year or in honor of Mary or other saints, it is customary in some places to celebrate a rite for the blessing of food or drink (for example, bread, water, wine, oil) or of other articles that the faithful devoutly present to be blessed. In such a celebration parish priests (pastors) are to ensure that the faithful have a correct understanding of the true meaning of the blessing. In his comments or homily the celebrant is as far as possible to take into account traditions and biographical information on the saints that may serve to clarify the origin and meaning of the special blessing celebrated in honor of a saint. There must always be respect for historical accuracy.

1782 Whenever a priest or a deacon carries out this kind of celebration in a church, a large attendance and the active participation of the faithful are desirable.

1783 When several kinds of food or drink or other articles are to be blessed, there is to be no duplication of rites, but everything is to be blessed in a single rite, in which the proper blessing formulary is used for each particular object.

1784 While maintaining the structure and chief elements of the rite, the celebrant should adapt the celebration to the circumstances of the place and the people involved.

1785 Celebration of these blessings within Mass, by use of the rite in nos. 1799-1804, is permitted only on feasts of Mary or the saints in places where there is a popular tradition for such a celebration and the faithful customarily attend Mass on these days. The blessing may be celebrated within Mass only once on any day.

## I. ORDER OF BLESSING OUTSIDE MASS

### INTRODUCTORY RITES

1786 When the community has gathered, a suitable song may be sung. After the singing, the celebrant says: **In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**

All make the sign of the cross and reply: **Amen.**

1787 The celebrant greets those present in the following or other suitable words, taken mainly from sacred Scripture. **May God, who has chosen us to be saints, be with you all.**

All make the following or some other suitable reply. **And also with you.**

1788 **In the following or similar words, the celebrant prepares those present for the blessing:**

**God makes known his mighty power and his abounding goodness to all the ends of the earth; but he also directs his Church to bless the simplest and most commonplace things. He does so in order that all who devoutly make use of material things (while invoking the name Mary and of the saints) may be drawn to the world that is not seen and may give glory to God, who alone performs the wonders we call miracles, but who is wonderful also in his saints.**

**READING OF THE WORD OF GOD**

1789 **A reader, another person present, or the celebrant reads a text of sacred Scripture, taken either from the Lectionary for Mass or from those given here.**

**Brothers and sisters, listen to the words of the holy gospel according to John:**

John 2:1-11

*You have kept the best wine till now.*

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.

Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding.

When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine."

(And) Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come."

His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you."

Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim.

Then he told them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it.

And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now."

Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.

**1791 Responsorial Psalm**

**Psalm 104 R. Bless the Lord, O my soul!**

*From ravines you make springs gush forth into watercourses that wind among the mountains;*

*they give drink to all the beasts of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst;*

*the birds of heaven dwell on their banks; from among the branches they send forth their song.*

*From your towering palace you water the hills; the earth drinks its fill of your gift.*

*You make grass grow for cattle and plants for man's use,*

*that he may bring forth bread from the earth,*

*and wine to gladden man's heart,*

*oil to make his face glisten, and bread to strengthen his heart.*

*The trees of the Lord drink their fill, the cedars he planted on Lebanon;*

*there, the sparrows make their nest; in the treetops the stork has its home;*

*for the wild goats there are the mountains; for the rock-badgers, the boulders and cliffs.*

*May the glory of the Lord last forever!  
May the Lord take pleasure in all his works!  
He looks at the earth and it trembles; he touches the mountains and they smoke.  
I will sing to the Lord all my life! I will sing for joy in my God as long as I live!*

1792 In the homily the celebrant explains both the biblical text and the meaning of the rite.

#### INTERCESSIONS

1793 As circumstances suggest, the prayer of blessing may be preceded by the intercessions. Intercessions that are best suited to the feast or liturgical season may be composed. The celebrant introduces them and an assisting minister or one of those present announces the intentions. The intentions are followed immediately by the prayer of blessing, no. 1795.

#### PRAYER OF BLESSING

1794 When there are no intercessions, the celebrant, before the prayer of blessing, says: **Let us pray.** As circumstances suggest, all may then pray for a moment in silence before the prayer of blessing.

1795 With hands outstretched, the celebrant says the prayer of blessing.

B) Blessing of wine:

**Blessed are you, Lord God, who fill the hungry and satisfy the thirsty,  
and give us wine to gladden our hearts.  
Grant that all who drink this wine in remembrance of Saint John the Beloved,  
who rested his head on your bosom during the Last Supper,  
may always rejoice in you  
and be invited to sit at your heavenly banquet for ever and ever.**

R. Amen.

1796 If this is the local custom, the objects blessed may now be sprinkled with holy water.

#### CONCLUDING RITE

1797 With hands outstretched over the faithful, the celebrant concludes the rite by saying:  
**May God look with favor on your devotion and in his goodness give you the help you need.**

R. Amen.

**May he give you serenity in your life and shower you with his blessings.**

R. Amen.

**May he rule over you with his strength and tender care in this life, so that he may raise you up to the reward of happiness in heaven.**

R. Amen.

**Then he blesses all present.**

**And may almighty God bless you all, the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit.**

R. Amen.

1798 It is preferable to end the celebration with a suitable song.

*At the family home, the wine is poured into a glass by the father/head of the household, who drinks and passes it first to a spouse, and then around the table to children and guests, in commemoration of the disciple of love. A greeting showing that it is love that binds the family together goes round with the cup: "Drink to the love of St. John, the Apostle."*

The next member of the family responds, **And where love is, there is God," takes the cup and drinks from it until all have shared from the cup of blessed wine.**

## Holy Family Sunday

The feast of the holy family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph (Sunday in the Christmas octave) is a festive occasion particularly suitable for the celebration of rites or moments of prayer proper to the Christian family. The recollection of Joseph, Mary and Jesus' going up to Jerusalem, together with other observant Jewish families, for the celebration of the Passover (cf. Lk 2, 41-42), should normally encourage a positive acceptance of the pastoral suggestion that all members of the family attend Mass on this day. This feast day also affords an opportunity for the renewal of our entrustment to the patronage of the Holy Family of Nazareth; the blessing of children as provided in the ritual; **[For Blessing of Children see *Book of Blessings* numbers 139-155; for Blessing of Families see *Book of Blessings* numbers 62-67--especially note the intercessions, which could be adapted for the Prayers of the Faithful for the day.]** and where opportune, for the renewal of marriage vows taken by the spouses on their wedding day, **[see *Book of Blessings* numbers 90-106]** and also for the exchange of promises between those engaged to be married in which they formalize their desire to found a new Christian family.<sup>6</sup> **[see *Book of Blessings* numbers 195-214].**

## December 31 - The Last Day of the Year

### The Turning of the Year: Endings and Beginnings

Popular piety has given rise to many pious exercises connected with 31 December. In many parts of the Western world the end of the civil year is celebrated on this day. This anniversary affords an opportunity for the faithful to reflect on "the mystery of time", which passes quickly and inexorably. Such should give rise to a dual feeling: of penance and sorrow for the sins committed during the year and for the lost occasions of grace; and of thanks to God for the graces and blessings He has given during the past year.

These sentiments have given rise to two pious exercises: prolonged exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, which afford an opportunity for the faithful and many religious communities for silent prayer; and the singing of the *Te Deum* as an act of community praise and thanksgiving to God for the graces received from Him as the year draws to a close.

*"A plenary indulgence [under the usual conditions] is granted to the faithful who devoutly assist either at the recitation or solemn singing of the *Te Deum* on the final day of the year to offer thanks to God for gifts received throughout the course of the entire year."* Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary. *Manual of Indulgences: Norms and Grants*. trans. of *Enchiridion Indulgentiarum quarto editur* (1999). (Washington, DC: USCCB Publishing, 2006) #26 §1, 2°, pp. 93-4. ***The most commonly known setting of the *Te Deum* is, "Holy God We Praise Thy Name"***

In some places, especially in monasteries and in associations of the faithful with a particular devotion to the Holy Eucharist, 31 December is marked by a vigil of prayer which concludes with the celebration of the Holy Mass. Such vigils are to be encouraged and should be celebrated in harmony with the liturgical content of the Christmas Octave, and not merely as a reaction to the thoughtless dissipation with which society celebrates the passage from one year to another, but as a vigil offering of the new year to the Lord.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> DPPL, no.112.

<sup>7</sup> DPPL, no. 114.

## January 1 - Mary, the Mother of God

### **World Day of Prayer for Peace - January 1 (Mary the Mother of God)**

The Holy See shares the profound aspirations of all people for peace. Since 1967, 1 January has been designated "world day for peace". The World Days of Peace are particularly intense moments of prayer for peace and for the commitment to build a world of peace. Pope Paul VI instituted these Days to dedicate to "thoughts and resolutions of Peace a special observance on the first day of the civil year". Peace expresses itself only in peace, a peace which is not separate from the demands of justice, but which is fostered by personal sacrifice, clemency, mercy and love".<sup>8</sup>

Popular piety has not been oblivious to this initiative of the Holy See. In the light of the new born Prince of Peace, it reserves this day for intense prayer for peace, education towards peace and those value inextricably linked with it, such as liberty, fraternal solidarity, the dignity of the human person, respect for nature, the right to work, the sacredness of human life, and the denunciation of injustices which trouble the conscience of man and threaten peace.<sup>9</sup>

In response to the tragedies of September 11, 2001, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have designated January 1 a Day of Prayer for Peace.<sup>10</sup> The bishops' declaration urges Catholics to pray the rosary on January 1, seeking the intercession of the Virgin Mary under her title "Queen of Peace."

### **Popular Piety and the Solemnity of the Holy Mother of God**<sup>11</sup>

On New Year's Day, the octave day of Christmas, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Holy Mother of God. The divine and virginal motherhood of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a singular salvific event: for Our Lady it was the foretaste and cause of her extraordinary glory; for us it is a source of grace and salvation because "through her we have received the Author of life".

The solemnity of the 1 January, an eminently Marian feast, presents an excellent opportunity for liturgical piety to encounter popular piety: the first celebrates this event in a manner proper to it; the second, when duly catechized, lends joy and happiness to the various expressions of praise offered to Our Lady on the birth of her divine Son, to deepen our understanding of many prayers, beginning with that which says: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us, sinners".

In the West, 1 January is an inaugural day marking the beginning of the civil year. The faithful are also involved in the celebrations for the beginning of the new year and exchange "new year" greetings. However, they should try to lend a Christian understanding to this custom making of these greetings an expression of popular piety. The faithful, naturally, realize that the "new year" is placed under the patronage of the Lord, and in exchanging new year greetings they implicitly and explicitly place the New Year under the Lord's dominion, since to him belongs all time (cf. Rev. 1, 8; 22,13).

---

<sup>8</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. 2 April 2004, no. 520.

<sup>9</sup> DPPL, no.117.

<sup>10</sup> BCL Newsletter, October/November 2001. On Thursday, November 14, 2001 the plenary gathering approved a recommendation from the USCCB by the Committee on the Liturgy that January 1, 2001, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, be designated as a National Day of Prayer for Peace.

<sup>11</sup> DPPL, nos. 115-117.



A connection between this consciousness and the popular custom of singing the *Veni Creator Spiritus* can easily be made so that on 1 January the faithful can pray that the Spirit may direct their thoughts and actions, and those of the community during the course of the year.

“A plenary indulgence [under the usual conditions] is granted to the faithful who devoutly assist either at the recitation or solemn singing of the *Veni Creator [Spiritus]* on the first day of the year to implore divine assistance for the course of the whole year.” Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary. *Manual of Indulgences: Norms and Grants*, trans. of *Enchiridion Indulgentiarum quarto editur* (1999). (Washington, DC: USCCB Publishing, 2006) #26 §1, 1<sup>o</sup>, pp. 93-4. ***The most commonly known setting of the Veni Creator [Spiritus] is, “Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest”***

New year greetings also include an expression of hope for a peaceful New Year. This has profound biblical, Christological and incarnational origins. The "quality of peace" has always been invoked throughout history by all men, and especially during violent and destructive times of war.

### **National Migration Week - First [full] week of January**

Since 1980, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has set aside the first [full] week of January each year as National Migration Week (NMW). The goal of NMW is to educate the native-born U.S. population about the similarities between them, immigrants in their community, and refugees around the world. The week provides an opportunity to reflect on the positive aspects and contributions of immigrants and refugees in this country.

For more information, visit [www.usccb.org/mrs/nmw.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/mrs/nmw.shtml)

## **Epiphany**

### **Epiphany: “The Festival of Light” - A Principal Festival of the Year**

The ancient solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord ranks among the principal festivals of the whole liturgical year, since it celebrates in the child born of Mary the manifestation of the one who is Son of God, the Messiah of the Jewish people, and a light to the nations. This solemnity is to be celebrated in a proper manner. There is to be, “a suitable and increased display of lights.”<sup>12</sup>

It is rare for the *Ceremonial of Bishops* to make any mention of topics concerning the liturgical environment. One way to ensure the “...suitable and increased display of lights...” would be to make sure to use candles (or more candles) in the processions; if this this not already done in the parish. Another way would be to use the processional cross and candles to lead the procession with the peoples’ gifts, as described: *On more solemn occasions such as Sundays, servers bearing candles and cross accompany (lead) the procession from the place where the bread, wine and other offerings are kept to the sanctuary.*<sup>13</sup>

### **The Proclamation of the Movable Feasts on Epiphany**

The *Proclamation of the Date of Easter on Epiphany* dates from a time when calendars were not readily available. It was necessary to make known the date of Easter in advance, since many celebrations of the liturgical year depend on its date. The number of Sundays that follow Epiphany, the date of Ash Wednesday, and the number of Sundays that follow Pentecost are all computed in

<sup>12</sup> CB, no. 240.

<sup>13</sup> USCCB, *Introduction to the Order of Mass: A Pastoral Resource of the Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy* (hereafter IOM), (Washington, DC: 2003), no. 22.



relation to Easter. Although calendars now give the date of Easter and the other feasts in the liturgical year for many years in advance, the Epiphany proclamation still has value. Its revival in many places would be opportune since it served to make the connection between the Epiphany and Easter, and orientate all feasts towards the greatest Christian solemnity.<sup>14</sup> It is a reminder of the centrality of the resurrection of the Lord in the liturgical year and the importance of the great mysteries of faith which are celebrated each year. It is an option that can be worth reviving. It can be found below.

*From the ambo, after the gospel, the homily, or after prayer after communion, the deacon or, in his absence, another minister [cantor, reader] sings (chants) or speaks the proclamation.*

## THE PROCLAMATION OF THE DATE OF EASTER ON EPIPHANY

Dear brothers and sisters, the glory of the Lord has shone upon us,  
and shall ever be manifest among us, until the day of his return.

Through the rhythms of times and seasons  
let us celebrate the mysteries of salvation.

Let us recall the year's culmination, the Easter Triduum of the Lord:  
his last supper, his crucifixion, his burial, and his rising celebrated  
between the evening of the **First of April**.  
and the evening of the **Fourth of April**.

Each Easter— as on each Sunday—  
the Holy Church makes present the great and saving deed  
by which Christ has for ever conquered sin and death.

From Easter are reckoned all the days we keep holy.  
Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent,  
will occur on the **Seventeenth of February**.

The Ascension of the Lord will be commemorated  
on the **Sixteenth of May**.

Pentecost, the joyful conclusion of the season of Easter,  
will be celebrated on the **Twenty-Third of May**.

And this year the First Sunday of Advent  
will be on the **Twenty-Eighth of November**.

Likewise the pilgrim Church proclaims the Passover of Christ  
in the feasts of the Holy Mother of God,  
in the feasts of the Apostles and Saints,  
and in the commemoration of the faithful departed.

To Jesus Christ, who was, who is, and who is to come,  
Lord of time and history,  
be endless praise, for ever and ever.  
R/. Amen. [Amen. Amen.]

<sup>14</sup> DPPL, no. 118.

## Summary Table of Liturgical Dates

Feast	2010	2011	2012	2013
(Sunday/Wkday)	C/II	A/I	B/II	C/I
Advent I	29 Nov 2009	28 Nov 2010	27 Nov 2011	2 Dec 2012
Christmas	Friday '09	Sat 2010	Sun 2011	Tue 12(LY)
Epiphany	3 Jan 2010	2 Jan 2011	8 Jan 2012	6 Jan 2013
Ash Wed.	17 Feb 2010	9 Mar 2011	22 Feb 2012	13 Feb 2013
Passion/Palm Sun	28 Mar 2010	17 Apr 2011	1 Apr 2012	24 Mar 2013
Holy Thursday	1 Apr 2010	21 Apr 2011	5 Apr 2012	28 Mar 2013
Good Friday	2 Apr 2010	22 Apr 2011	6 Apr 2012	29 Mar 2013
Holy Saturday	3 Apr 2010	23 Apr 2011	7 Apr 2012	30 Mar 2013
Easter Sunday	4 Apr 2010	24 Apr 2011	8 Apr 2012	31 Mar 2013
Ascension*	16 May 2010	5 Jun 2011	20 May 2012	12 May 2013
Pentecost	23 May 2010	12 Jun 2011	27 May 2012	19 May 2013
Christ the King	21 Nov 2010	19 Nov 2011	25 Nov 2012	24 Nov 2013
Year	2010	2011	2012	2013

\*On November 16, 1998, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, in accord with the provisions of canon 1246 §2, approved a procedure whereby the bishops of each ecclesiastical province would determine whether the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord would be transferred to the Seventh Sunday of Easter in their ecclesiastical province. The decision, confirmed by the Holy See in 1999, has now been acted upon by all ecclesiastical provinces in the United States. The ecclesiastical provinces of Boston, Hartford, New York, Newark, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, DC, Atlanta and Nebraska have retained the celebration of the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord on the proper Thursday, while all other provinces have transferred this celebration to the Seventh Sunday of Easter.

### **Blessing homes with blessed chalk**<sup>15</sup>

The blessing of homes, on whose lintels are inscribed the Cross of salvation, together with the indication of the year and the initials of the Magi [Caspar, Melchior, & Balthasar] (20+C+M+B+XX), which can also be interpreted to abbreviate the Latin phrase, *Christus mansionem benedicat* ['May Christ bless this house'], are written in blessed chalk; this custom, often accompanied by processions of children accompanied by their parents, expresses the blessing of Christ through the intercession of the three wise men and is an occasion for gathering offerings for charitable and missionary purposes.

### **Baptism of the Lord**

Christmastide closes with the Baptism of the Lord. The feast presents an excellent opportunity for the faithful to be reminded of their rebirth as children of God in Baptism.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> DPPL, no. 118.

<sup>16</sup> DPPL, no. 119.

The the Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling Holy Water (in place of the Penitential Rite) could be used at all Masses on this day, and homilies could well concentrate on the symbols associated with Baptism.

### **Pastoral Note on the Sprinkling Rite:**

The 2003 Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy document, *Introduction to the Order of Mass* states: "If the baptismal font is near the church doors, the greeting [of the Mass] & blessing [of water] may take place there. The priest may then sprinkle during the entrance procession. (#74)

Also, the 2007 U.S. Bishops' document *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship* reminds us that, "When the liturgy calls for a *Gloria*, the singing of the *Gloria* is not to take place during the Sprinkling Rite." (#150).

You could sing a hymn during the entrance procession and use a simple repeated refrain during the Sprinkling Rite. For example, you could use the version of the antiphon, "Springs of Water" from the music provided for the Easter Vigil.

### **National Vocation Awareness Week - Second week of January**

The National Coalition for Church Vocations (NCCV) sponsors and provides materials for three observances throughout the year: National Vocation Awareness Week, World Day for Consecrated Life, and World Day of Prayer for Vocations. Vocations Awareness week happens in the second week of January. In upcoming years the dates are: January 11-16, 2009; January 10-15, 2010. For more information, visit [www.nccv-vocations.org](http://www.nccv-vocations.org)

### **The End of the Christmas Season & decorations**

The Baptism of the Lord is the end of the Christmas Season. **Next Sunday should look different than the last weeks.** Even though poinsettias are oftentimes hardy plants, their ongoing presence in the worship space just shouts "Christmas." Consider offering the plants as return gifts to those who may have given them in memory of a loved one, to homebound parishioners, as gifts to local care facilities, senior housing centers, or other places where they will be appreciated.

## **Winter Ordinary Time**

Ordinary Time begins on Monday after the Baptism of the Lord and continues until Tuesday before Ash Wednesday inclusive.<sup>17</sup>

## **Christian Unity Octave**

### **World Week of Prayer for Christian Unity - January 18-25**

The Week was originally begun in 1908 by the American Episcopalian clergyman Paul Wattson; who later became a Catholic and founded the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement in Graymoor, NY.

The Week begins on 18 January and ends on 25 January—the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul. Material for the Week of Prayer is prepared in collaboration by Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and The Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches.

---

<sup>17</sup> *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar*, [hereafter GNLY] no. 44.

The theme and text for each year's observance of the Week of Prayer are chosen and prepared by representatives of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and representatives of the World Council of Churches. The international texts are developed, adapted and published for use in the USA by the Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute.

For more information, visit [www.atonementfriars.org/week\\_of\\_prayer.htm](http://www.atonementfriars.org/week_of_prayer.htm)

### **Suggested ideas for a Mass during the Unity Octave**

The suggested psalm below, the readings in the Lectionary for Mass at 867–871, “For Christian Unity,” along with prayers from the *Sacramentary*, and hymns for unity might be used on appropriate weekdays during this week of special prayer.

### **Suggested Psalm for Christian Unity Ps 122**

One of the “songs of ascent,” this psalm was prayed by pilgrims as they approach Jerusalem, going up the hill of the Temple Mount. Their prayer was for peace in this city that had known such division (and still does).

*Con Qué Alegría/Let Us Go Rejoicing (Cortés)*

*I Rejoiced (Walker)*

*I Rejoiced When I Heard (Batastini/Gelineau)*

*I Rejoiced When I Heard Them Say (O'Carroll)*

*I Rejoiced When I Heard Them Say (Warner)*

*I Was Glad (Haas)*

*Let Us Go Rejoicing (Guimont)*

*Let Us Go Rejoicing (Hurd)*

*Let Us Go Rejoicing (Joncas)*

### **Some suggested Christian Unity Songs**

*All Are Welcome (Haugen)*

*Anthem (Conry)*

*As a Fire Is Meant for Burning (Duck)*

*Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation*

*Diverse in Culture, Nation, Race (Duck)*

*Father, We Thank Thee Who Has Planted*

*For the Healing of the Nations (Kaan)*

*In Christ There Is No East or West*

*The Church's One Foundation*

*Ubi Caritas et Amor (Chant)*

*Ubi Caritas et Amor (Taizé)*

*We Are Many Parts (Haugen)*

*Where Charity and Love Prevail*

## **January 22/23 - National Day of Prayer**

### **National Day of Prayer and Penance for violations against Human Dignity-January 22 or 23**

“In all the dioceses of the United States of America, January 22 (or January 23, when January 22 falls on a Sunday) shall be observed as a particular day of penance for violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion, and of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life. The Mass “For Peace and Justice” (no. 22 of the “Masses for Various Needs”) should be celebrated with violet vestments as an appropriate liturgical observance for this day.”<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> *General Instruction of the Roman Missal (USA edition)*, no. 373.

### **Suggestions for a Mass for Penance**

Lectionary #887–891

Some suggested Lectionary texts:

**Isaiah 32:15–18 (887-2).** The prophet’s vision of a peaceful society is one built on right and justice.

**Ps 72 (889-1)**

In the reign of the ideal king, the lowly and the poor will find justice.

*Every Nation on Earth (Joncas), Refrain II*

*Justice Shall Flourish (Cooney)*

*Justice Shall Flourish (Guimont)*

*Justice Shall Flourish (Schiavone)*

*Se Postrarán ante Ti/Every Nation upon Earth (Cortez), Respuesta II*

**or**

**Psalm 51**

**Philippians 4:6–9 (888-1).** Paul offers a “household code”—a simple set of rules to live by. For the Christian, this code requires fidelity to truth, justice, beauty, and excellence.

**Matthew 5:38–48 (891-2).** This section of the Sermon on the Mount contains some of the most challenging moral prescriptions in the New Testament: Offer no resistance to one who is evil; pray for your persecutors. On this day, these texts point us toward practices that will make our penance effective and our defense of life successful.

### **Suggested Songs of Penitence**

*As a Fire Is Meant for Burning*

*Change Our Hearts*

*Forgive Our Sins*

*Lead Me, Guide Me*

*Remember Your Love*

*The Cry of the Poor*

*There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy*

## **Catholic Schools Week**

### **Catholic Schools Week - last week in January**

Catholic Schools Week (CSW) is a joint project of the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Individual dioceses and local Catholic elementary and secondary schools develop and promote their own CSW activities each year. Catholic Schools Week celebration became an annual event in 1974. Catholic Schools Week celebrates education that goes beyond preparation for a secular life -- it is education that prepares students for a Christian life. CSW also celebrates the high standards of excellence and the quality of the education available to all students in Catholic elementary and secondary schools across the U.S.

For more information visit: [www.ncea.org/news/CatholicSchoolsWeek.asp](http://www.ncea.org/news/CatholicSchoolsWeek.asp)

## **February 2 - Presentation of the Lord**

This feast celebrates the fortieth day after Christmas—in the Eastern Churches it was celebrated on February 14, when it commemorated the fortieth day after Epiphany. That symbol of forty days is the reason for the feast’s traditional importance and for its use as the time when candles are blessed for use in the churches (and in homes)—this was the ‘Candle Mass’ (Candlemas). In the middle ages, the feast became associated by farmers with predictions about the weather (if the sun shone on

Candlemas and cast a shadow, then winter would continue; if it was cloudy and there was no shadow cast by the sun, then spring would come soon).<sup>19</sup>

On this day Christ's faithful people, with candles in their hands, go out to meet the Lord and to acclaim him with Simeon [and Anna], who recognized Christ as "a light to reveal God to the nations."<sup>20</sup> As the *Rite of Baptism* says: *Receive the light of Christ. Parents and Godparents, this light is entrusted to you to be kept burning brightly. This child of yours has been enlightened by Christ. He/she is to walk always as a child of the light. May he/she keep the flame of faith alive in his/her heart. When the Lord comes, may he/she go out to meet Him with all the saints in the heavenly kingdom. All the faithful are called by their faithful lives to "cast off the works of darkness,"* (Rom. 13:12) for Jesus is "*the light shining in the darkness, and darkness could not overpower it*". (Jn. 1:5)

The candles kept by the faithful in their homes should be seen as a sign of Christ "the light of the world" and an expression of faith.<sup>21</sup>

### **Blessing of Candles and Procession**

The entrance rite today is quite similar to the entrance rite for Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion, except that on this feast members of the community carry candles instead of palms. The *Roman Missal* provides for a fully-formed procession, with the assembly and its ministers first gathering in a separate place before processing into the church. If the solemn entrance is used instead, the assembly gathers in the church as usual. The presider then greets the assembly and blesses the candles from the entrance of the church and then processes with the ministers to the altar, while all hold their lighted candles.

A song is sung at the very beginning of the liturgy, while the candles of the people are lit and while the ministers take their places either in a place apart from the church or at the church entrance. The antiphon provided in the Missal expresses our faith that God brings "light to the eyes of those who serve him well."

The same or another song may be used to accompany the procession of the assembly and/or the ministers into the church. The *Roman Missal* uses an antiphon that speaks of "a light of revelation to the nations," along with verses drawn from the Canticle of Simeon, which we hear proclaimed in today's Gospel.

After the members of the assembly and the ministers have taken their places, the Mass continues with the singing of the *Gloria*.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> National Association of Pastoral Musicians. *NPM Music Planning Calendar*. <http://www.npm.org/Planning/yearb/present.html>

<sup>20</sup> CB, no. 241.

<sup>21</sup> DPPL, no. 123.

<sup>22</sup> National Association of Pastoral Musicians. *NPM Music Planning Calendar*. <http://www.npm.org/Planning/yearb/present.html>

**World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life - February 2nd Feast of the Presentation of the Lord**

**\*The US Bishops observe this on February 2 when that date falls on a Sunday; if not, it is observed on the Sunday after February 2.**

In *Vita Consecrata*, the 1996 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Pope John Paul II wrote of the different forms of consecrated life as “the many branches which sink its roots into the Gospel and bring forth abundant fruit in every season of the Church’s life.” These diverse forms include: Monastic Life, the Orders of Virgins, Hermits, and Widows, Institutes completely devoted to contemplation, Apostolic Religious Life, Secular Institutes, Societies of Apostolic Life, and new or renewed forms of the consecrated life (cf. *Vita Consecrata*, 6-12).

Then, in 1997, Pope John Paul II established the World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life, to be observed on the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord (February 2). World Day for Prayer for Consecrated Life, “...is intended 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 and, at the same time, is intended 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.”

The late Holy Father wrote: “I trust that this World Day of prayer and reflection will help the *particular Churches* to treasure ever more the gift of consecrated life and to be measured by its message, to find the proper and fruitful balance between action and contemplation, between prayer and charity, and between commitment in the present time and eschatological hope.”

To read John Paul II’s first message for this day, visit [www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccsclife/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_06011997\\_i-consecrated-life-day\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccsclife/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_06011997_i-consecrated-life-day_en.html)

The National Coalition for Church Vocations (NCCV) sponsors and provides materials for World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life. For more information, visit [www.nccv-vocations.org](http://www.nccv-vocations.org)