

OFFICE FOR DIVINE WORSHIP

AUGUST 2026

New Mailing address:

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Archdiocese of Philadelphia
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LITURGICAL CALENDAR ITEMS

SOLEMNITY OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Saturday, August 15, 2026

Since this Holy Day falls on a Saturday, the obligation is suspended.

The Anticipated Mass on Saturday evening is for the Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

**THE COMPLETE LIST OF HOLY DAYS OF OBLIGATION
AND THEIR OBSERVANCES FOR 2026-2027**

Sunday, November 1, 2026
Solemnity of All Saints

Tuesday, December 8, 2026
Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Patronal Feast of the United States of America

Friday, December 25, 2026
Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)
Please note: In the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, the Vigil Mass cannot be celebrated before 4:00 PM.

Friday, January 1, 2027
Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

Thursday, May 6, 2027
Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord

Sunday, August 15, 2027
Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Monday, November 1, 2027
Solemnity of All Saints
Since this Holy Day falls on a Monday, the obligation is suspended.

Wednesday, December 8, 2027
Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Patronal Feast of the United States of America

Saturday, December 25, 2027
Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)
Please note: In the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, the Vigil Mass cannot be celebrated before 4:00 PM.

MASS FOR THE OPENING OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR

A votive *Mass of the Holy Spirit* may be scheduled for the opening of the academic year on weekdays when there is no liturgical impediment. The *Roman Missal* provides three options for this Votive Mass. One of the prefaces of the Holy Spirit is used and red vestments are worn. The Lectionary texts for the day are preferable.

Also, see the options in the *Book of Blessings*, Chapter 5: Order for the Blessing of Students and Teachers, for another way to celebrate liturgically the opening of the academic year.

TIME OF THE EASTER VIGIL 2027

The Easter Vigil is the first Mass of Easter Sunday and is not in any way to be considered an Anticipated Mass for Easter Sunday. **This is why the discipline of the Church insists that it should not begin before nightfall in any circumstance.** It may be helpful to know that sunset, according to a variety of models, occurs approximately at 7:20 PM on March 27, 2027. This information is provided at this time to assist with calendar planning for 2027. In general, given the variable date for Easter, it seems best to schedule the Easter Vigil each year for 8:00 PM or later.

CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

The Office for Divine Worship has the responsibility for direction, guidance and support of pastors and those who collaborate with them in the formation of adults for Christian Initiation. Additional information on Christian Initiation for adults can be found on the website for the Office for Divine Worship, under the heading *Christian Initiation*.

PLEASE NOTE

Full Sacramental Initiation—Baptism, Confirmation and the first Reception of Holy Communion—apart from the Easter Vigil, outside of the immediate danger of death, requires the permission of the Archbishop (see OCIA, no. 331). Archbishop Perez delegates the Office for Divine Worship to give this permission. Please contact the Office for Divine Worship for such circumstances.

If there are any questions about the celebration of Baptism in unusual or irregular circumstances, please contact the Office for Divine Worship.

WORKSHOPS FOR LITURGICAL MINISTERS

If any parish or institution would like a workshop for liturgical ministers, especially Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, please contact the Office for Divine Worship. If a parish or institution conducts its own workshop for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, please

contact the Office for Divine Worship to obtain the mandate letters from the Archbishop of Philadelphia for the new Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

The full schedule of liturgical ministry workshops for 2026-2027 will be published in a separate mailing this month, August 2026, and on the Office for Divine Worship website. Register for these workshops at worship@archphila.org.

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

GENERAL NORMS

- **All Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, without exception, are to have a current appointment letter from the Archbishop.**
- **Extraordinary Ministers who serve in institutions and schools throughout the Archdiocese are typically commissioned for service in their parishes and likewise commissioned for service in the institution and/or school.**
- Candidates are to be fully initiated practicing Catholics, high school graduates, not in an invalid marriage, recognized for faith and devotion to the Holy Eucharist as well as for service in the parish/institution/school. Pastors/chaplains are reminded to be discerning in the invitation to members of the lay faithful to carry out this ministry.
- Pastors and chaplains are encouraged to send new Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to the archdiocesan formation and training sessions. Letters of Appointment from the Archbishop will then follow. *Veteran Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are also welcome to attend.*
- Pastors and chaplains are reminded to inform the Office for Divine Worship if they conduct their own formation and training as well as to send to this office their request for new Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. Request forms can be found on the Office for Divine Worship website. Letters of Appointment from the Archbishop will then follow.
- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are appointed for a three-year term and for the place where they are commissioned. Terms may be renewed if agreeable to both the pastor/chaplain and the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. All records of active Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are maintained by the parish/institution/school.

- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are commissioned after participation in a formation and training session, according to the form found in the *Book of Blessings*, Chapter 63, "Order for the Commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion."
- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion **only** serve in the parishes/institutions/schools for which they are commissioned.

NORMS FOR ALTAR SERVERS

ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA OFFICE FOR DIVINE WORSHIP

March 20, 2023

The celebration of the Sacred Liturgy requires the presence of altar servers for the reverent and fitting execution of the liturgical rites, especially for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

- For the Holy Eucharist, the altar servers carry the thurible and boat when used, the cross and candles in the entrance procession, in the recessional, and the procession with the *Book of the Gospels*. Additionally, they minister the *Roman Missal* (and other books/binders) at the priest celebrant's chair and assist with the cruets and hand washing at the altar, ring the bell during the Eucharistic Prayer and hold the Communion Plate, if used, during the distribution of Holy Communion.
- In the absence of a deacon and/or instituted acolyte, the altar servers assist with the preparation of the altar, including the sacred vessels, and the clearing of the altar after the distribution of Holy Communion, again including the sacred vessels.
- Likewise, with celebrations of the Sacred Liturgy apart from the Eucharist, altar servers should carry out the needed roles to assist the celebrant with the various elements for the liturgical rites, especially with ministering the liturgical book(s).

Altar servers can be adult men and women as well as school age boys and girls. Those who carry out the liturgical ministry of serving the Sacred Liturgy are to be Roman Catholics who can also receive Holy Communion. As with all liturgical ministries, the role of liturgical service finds its completion in the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ. *It is also possible and permitted to continue to have only men and/or boys assist as altar servers.*

Altar servers are to be properly trained for their various roles and duties in the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy. Once altar servers are trained, it is recommended that they receive the blessing provided in the *Book of Blessings* for this liturgical ministry.

Altar servers are to be vested for their role in the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy. The unadorned white alb is the common garment for adult and school age altar servers. The alb should be fastened around the waist with a white cincture. There is no need for any additional crosses, medals and/or sashes. There should be uniformity in the vesture and appearance of the altar servers. *Male altar servers may retain the custom of wearing the black or red cassock and surplice for the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy.*

Altar servers are to be seated in the sanctuary for the ease of carrying out their duties. They do not sit on either side of the priest celebrant. Only the deacon sits to the side of the priest celebrant.

The number of altar servers assigned is determined by the ritual needs for the particular celebration. A Solemn Mass may require a thurifer, cross bearer, and two candle bearers. The cross bearer could also minister the *Roman Missal* and the candle bearers could assist at the altar. A weekday Mass may require only one server. It is important to have the number of altar servers needed without having too many or too few for the reverent and fitting celebration of the Sacred Liturgy. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* for the Eucharist and the introductions to the other ritual books provide guidance for the roles and duties of the altar servers.

Certain occasions during the course of the Liturgical Year, such as the Sacred Paschal Triduum as well as when a Bishop celebrates, for example for the conferral of the Sacrament of Confirmation, require distinct reviews of the roles and duties for the altar servers. The importance of a review cannot be underestimated for the benefit of the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy and of the altar servers.

It is recommended that each parish and institution have someone to coordinate the altar servers, to provide training, scheduling and oversight.

Parishes and institutions are encouraged to share resources regarding altar servers, especially when it comes to opportunities for formation and enrichment.

Altar servers should periodically be directed to focus on their actual participation in the Sacred Liturgy as their primary duty and to see this same duty, which is enhanced with serving, as the indispensable source for living a Christian life.

GUIDELINES FOR THE BUILDING AND RENOVATING OF CHURCHES AND CHAPELS IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia, in addition to what is described in the liturgical ritual books, follows the guidelines of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for the building and renovating of churches and chapels. These guidelines are found in the USCCB document, *Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture and Worship*, 2007, Fifth Printing, revised.

GUIDELINES FOR CHAPELS IN RECTORIES

The Office for Divine Worship, according to the Archdiocesan Policy Manual, has oversight for Chapels in Rectories. Pastors are asked to review these guidelines for compliance. Please direct any questions or concerns about chapels in rectories to the Office for Divine Worship.

RECURRING INFORMATION

THE PRAYER TO SAINT MICHAEL, THE ARCHANGEL

Many parishes and institutions within the Archdiocese of Philadelphia pray the prayer to Saint Michael in conjunction with the celebration of Mass. You are reminded that this devotional prayer is to take place outside of Mass. It is not to be prayed as the concluding prayer of the Universal Prayer nor as part of the Communion Rite.

TIME FOR VIGIL MASSES AND ANTICIPATED MASSES

The time for Vigil Masses and Anticipated Masses in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia is no earlier than 4:00 PM. This applies to Holy Days of Obligation as well, including Christmas.

THE MASS SCHEDULE FOR HOLY DAYS WHEN THE OBLIGATION IS SUSPENDED

In the United States, there are three Holy Days, Solemnities, when the obligation to participate in Mass is suspended when the observance falls on a Monday or a Saturday—the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God (January 1), the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (August 15), and the Solemnity of All Saints (November 1). In these instances, the Mass schedule certainly can be modified. However, there should be the celebration of one Mass at least for the benefit of the faithful who desire to attend Mass.

LINKS TO HELPFUL INFORMATION

THE LITURGICAL EXCHANGE

For information about the new Liturgical Exchange in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, please see: <https://www.liturgicalexchange.com/>.

FOR THE MOST RECENT NEWSLETTER FROM THE USCCB

Individual issues of the Newsletter are posted online around the fifteenth of the month approximately three months after they have been released to subscribers.

For information on subscribing to the newsletter, visit:

<https://www.usccb.org/committees/divine-worship/newsletter>

FOR PAST MONTHLY MAILINGS OF THE OFFICE FOR DIVINE WORSHIP

Visit: <http://www.odwphiladelphia.org/sacred-liturgy/monthly-mailings/>.