



NewsLetter

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**BLESSINGS AND GOOD WISHES FOR
A BLESSED ADVENT, A JOYOUS CHRISTMAS,
AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR 2025
from the Committee on Divine Worship
and the staff of the Secretariat of Divine Worship!**

Pope Francis Institutes Annual Remembrance of Saints, Blesseds, Venerables, and Servants of God in Particular Churches

In a letter dated November 9, 2024, Pope Francis called upon each particular Church to honor its saints, blesseds, venerables, and servants of God every year on November 9, the Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica, beginning in 2025. The Holy Father clarified, however, that “[i]t is not a matter of inserting a new memorial into the liturgical calendar, but of promoting with appropriate initiatives outside the liturgy, or of recalling within it, for example in the homily or at another time deemed appropriate, those figures who have characterized the local Christian path and spirituality.” The English translation of the Pope’s letter is available at Vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2024/documents/20241109-lettera-chiese-particolari.html.

The Holy Father roots this new initiative in the universal call to holiness, which manifests itself in various witnesses of the Christian life: spouses, workers, adolescents and young people, pastors, men and women religious, as well as the poor, the sick, and the suffering. The Holy Father underlines these witnesses’ “everyday” or “next door” holiness, and, among them, the martyrs, saints, blesseds, venerables, and servants of God stand out. Ongoing processes of beatification and canonization show that holiness is not lacking in our time, and, in these witnesses, the faithful see not only holiness but the face of the Church – holy Mother of all the holy ones.

While the Pope notes that Conferences of Bishops may draw up guidelines, action at the diocesan level also seems appropriate on account of the eminently local character of these remembrances. In addition to the homily, the Prayer of the Faithful and the music of the liturgy are appropriate places to honor and remember these figures. As preparations are made, it is important to keep in mind that, while one may honor and remember venerables and servants of God, public veneration is not permitted for persons who have not been beatified or canonized. Additionally, the public cult of a blessed is restricted to certain territories; only those who have been canonized can be venerated universally in public.

Liturgical Proposals from the 2021-2024 Synod of Bishops on Synodality

The second session of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops – under the topic “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission” – approved its Final Document on October 26, 2024. In lieu of a Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Pope Francis approved the document as a part of his ordinary magisterium. The original Italian text of the Final Document and seven official translations, including English and Spanish, are available at [Synod.va/en/news/final-document-of-the-xvi-assembly.html](https://synod.va/en/news/final-document-of-the-xvi-assembly.html). While liturgical themes are present throughout, the excerpts below are reprinted for the benefit of our readers, highlighting particular suggestions from the Synod participants concerning the celebration of the liturgy:

From “The Sacramental Roots of the People of God”

27. There is a close link between *synaxis* and *synodos*, between the Eucharistic assembly and the synodal assembly. In both cases, albeit in different forms, Jesus’ promise to be present where two or three are gathered in His name is fulfilled (cf. Mt 18:20). Synodal assemblies are events that celebrate the union of Christ with His Church through the action of the Spirit. It is the Spirit who ensures the unity of the ecclesial body of Christ in the Eucharistic assembly as well as in the synodal assembly. The liturgy is a listening to the Word of God and a response to His covenantal initiative. Similarly, the synodal assembly is a listening to this same Word, which resounds as much in the signs of the times as in the hearts of the faithful, and also a response of the assembly that is discerning God’s will in order to put it into practice. Deepening the link between liturgy and synodality will help all Christian communities, in the diversity of their cultures and traditions, to adopt celebratory styles that make visible the face of a synodal Church. To this end, we call for the establishment of a specific Study Group which would be entrusted with reflection on how to make liturgical celebrations more an expression of synodality. It could also consider the topic of preaching within liturgical celebrations as well as the development of catechetical resources on synodality from a mystagogical perspective.

From “Charisms, Vocations, and Ministries for Mission”

60. [...] Scripture attests to the prominent role of many women in the history of salvation. One woman, Mary Magdalene, was entrusted with the first proclamation of the Resurrection. On the day of Pentecost, Mary, the Mother of God, was present, accompanied by many other women who had followed the Lord. It is important that the Scripture passages that relate these stories find adequate space inside liturgical lectionaries. [...]

From “Ecclesial Discernment for Mission”

83. Listening to the Word of God is the starting point and criterion for all ecclesial discernment. The Scriptures testify that God has spoken to His People to the point of giving us in Jesus the fullness of all Revelation (cf. *Dei Verbum* 2). They indicate the places where we can hear His voice. God communicates with us first of all in the liturgy because it is Christ himself who speaks “when scripture is read in the Church” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7). God speaks through the living Tradition of the Church, the Magisterium, personal and communal meditation on the Scriptures, and the practices of popular piety. [...]

From “The Exchange of Gifts”

122. The exchange of gifts is of crucial significance in the journey towards full and visible unity among all Churches and Christian communions. Moreover, it represents an effective sign of the unity in the faith and love of Christ that promotes both the credibility and the impact of the Christian mission (cf. Jn 17:21). [...] The example of the saints and witnesses to the faith from other Christian Churches and Communions is also a gift that we can receive, including by inserting their memorial – especially that of the martyrs – into our liturgical calendar.

USCCB Administrative Committee Approves New National Shrine in New York

On September 10, 2024, the USCCB Administrative Committee approved designating the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians in Stony Point, New York as the country’s latest National Shrine. The Shrine, owned and operated by the Salesians of Don Bosco, includes an outdoor altar in white marble and a Rosary Way with marble statues depicting the mysteries of the rosary. It also includes a retreat center and an indoor chapel to host many pilgrims.

Implementing the *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults*: Simpler Order and Shorter Order of Adult Initiation

With the publication of the revised edition of the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) in English and Spanish, the Newsletter continues the series exploring this ritual, in particular, what is new and which aspects are in need of renewal in pastoral practice over the last forty years. This fifth article explores the rites of Chapter III, the Simpler Order of Adult Initiation, and Chapter IV, the Shorter Order of Adult Initiation to Be Used in Near Danger of Death or at the Point of Death.

The Simpler and Shorter Orders of Christian Initiation are for use with persons whose circumstances do not require or permit them to participate in the full “Order of the Catechumenate Arranged in Steps” (Chapter I). Each of these Orders may be used not only for adults who have completed their fourteenth year but also for children of catechetical age in these circumstances, with appropriate adaptations.

Simpler Order of Adult Initiation (Chapter III)

Chapter III, the “Simpler Order of Adult Initiation,” is provided primarily for individuals in two different situations. First, there are those who have not been able to participate in one or more of the rites of the catechumenate due to extraordinary circumstances, for example, sickness, advanced age, change of residence, or long journeys (cf. OCIA, nos. 331 and 332). Second, there are those whom the diocesan bishop or local ordinary judges to be sincere in their Christian conversion and mature in their religious belief and practice, determining that they may receive Baptism without delay (cf. no. 331). In these two cases, the diocesan bishop or local ordinary may permit the use of the Simpler Order, in either its expanded or abbreviated form (cf. nos. 34, 4 and 331). In both forms, those to be initiated choose godparents and become acquainted with the local community. An adequate period of instruction and preparation follows, in which individuals purify their motives for Baptism and mature in conversion and faith (cf. nos. 335, 1 and 336). Everything is done according to the norms established by the diocesan bishop (*National Statutes for the Christian Initiation of Adults*, Norm 17, 4°), and the community should actively participate in the rites insofar as possible (OCIA, nos. 335, 2 and 339).

The Expanded Form – Generally taking place over the course of several celebrations, the use of the expanded form is most appropriate for the first situation noted above, namely, when a person did not participate in one or more of the rites of the catechumenate. Its use is also important for those whose spiritual welfare would be harmed by an abbreviated process that deprives them of the benefits of a lengthier preparation. Certain indications are given regarding possible arrangements of the expanded form (cf. no. 334, 1-3): the rites of the catechumenate or of *Handing On* may be added to the abbreviated form; the individual parts of the abbreviated form may be divided and enlarged; or parts of the abbreviated form may substitute for rites of the regular Order. Insofar as possible, a Period of Mystagogy should follow the reception of the sacraments (cf. no. 335, 3). No sample rite is given for the expanded form, since pastoral ministers must discern the circumstances and needs of each individual then tailor the rite(s) of Initiation accordingly.

The Abbreviated Form – The abbreviated form is a single rite, and its celebration is most appropriate for those in the second situation noted above, namely, those whom the competent authority has determined to be ready for Baptism without delay. This rite is normally celebrated within Mass, preferably on a Sunday, and the prayers and readings may be taken from the Ritual Mass “For the Conferral of Baptism” when the rubrics permit, or from the Sunday or Feast of the day. When combined with the Eucharist, the Rite of Reception (nos. 340-345) replaces the usual Introductory Rites of the Mass, and the Liturgy of the Word immediately follows. Notwithstanding the indications of OCIA, no. 346, it would seem appropriate to add the Gloria, when prescribed, and the Collect of the Mass.

The abbreviated form consists of several elements from various rites of the usual Order. The Rite of Reception (nos. 340-345) approximates the Rite of Introduction from the Entrance into the Catechumenate (nos. 48-50, 52-53, 60), without the signing of the forehead and of the senses (nos. 54-57). Another difference is the affirmation of the godparent. At Entrance into the Catechumenate, the sponsors affirm that they are prepared to help those

entering the catechumenate. At the abbreviated form, the godparent also judges the individual to be worthy of admission to the sacraments, approximating material from Election (no. 344; cf. no. 131). The Liturgy of the Word (nos. 346-352) includes elements that approximate a Scrutiny (nos. 349 and 351-352), with the formula from the regular Order that precedes the anointing with the Oil of Catechumens (no. 352; cf. no. 103). The Celebration of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist follow.

Shorter Order of Adult Initiation to Be Used in Near Danger of Death or at the Point of Death (Chapter IV)

The celebration of Initiation for a person in danger of death varies depending upon the circumstances of the person and the minister who is celebrating. Catechists and laypersons use the Shorter Order. Priests and deacons, on the other hand, should use the abbreviated form of the Simpler Order (cf. no. 372). In this case, it is fitting for the celebrant to make certain adaptations, for example, using the Shorter Order's dialogue and affirmation (nos. 377 and 378), Intercessions (no. 380), and, if the neophyte is in imminent or proximate danger of death, the formula for Viaticum (no. 395). Every effort should be made to find a priest to preside at this liturgy, so that he may administer Confirmation and celebrate the rites within Mass, allowing the neophyte in danger of death to participate in the Eucharistic sacrifice. In very urgent situations, however, clergy may use the Shorter Order (cf. no. 372), and, when death is imminent, both ordained and lay ministers omit everything and baptize the person with water and the usual formula (cf. no. 373). The celebration of the sacraments should be recorded in the register of the parish in whose territory they are administered.

Both the Shorter and Simpler Orders presume that the person in danger of death is able to hear and answer questions (cf. no. 370). Before the celebration of the rite, recipients who are catechumens promise to complete the usual catechesis after recovery, and recipients who are not catechumens must manifest "serious signs of conversion," not be bound by obstacles to a moral life, and promise to complete an appropriate course of Initiation when health is restored (cf. no. 371). It is the Church's responsibility to provide instruction and the other sacraments of Initiation to those who recover their health, observing those pastoral indications set down in Chapter V, "Preparing Adults for Confirmation and the Eucharist Who Were Baptized as Infants and Did Not Receive Catechesis" (nos. 400-410).

Shape of the Rite – In light of the circumstances of the person in danger of death, the Shorter Order is even more condensed than the abbreviated form of the Simpler Order. The Beginning of the Rite includes only the dialogue and affirmation by the godparent and witnesses, and the Liturgy of the Word consists of a single reading from a Gospel followed by simpler intercessions and a concluding oration. The Celebration of Baptism does not include the blessing of water, the clothing with a white garment, or the handing on of a lighted candle, omissions which seem due to the circumstances of the sick person rather than the fact that these rites may be carried out by laypersons. (The rite for catechists in the *Order of Baptism of Children* (OBC) includes each of these elements [cf. OBC, nos. 142-143, 152, and 153].)

The Importance of Fully Celebrating These Orders

The extraordinary circumstances of individuals receiving sacraments of Initiation may sometimes incline celebrants to carry out these Orders with less preparation and fervor than they would for those in normal situations. While communities are accustomed and prepared to celebrate Initiation fully at the Easter Vigil each year, celebrating Initiation fully at other times may require greater effort on the part of pastors and people. Nevertheless, as the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy underlines: "Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people [...] is their right and duty by reason of their baptism" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 14). The liturgical participation of individuals, their right and duty, is greatly enriched by the presence of a community, a full complement of liturgical ministers, song, movement, and symbolic gesture. The circumstances of life may have prevented the celebration of the usual Order, but these men and women need and are worthy of liturgy celebrated fully. These persons, even the sick and the dying, are not only recipients of the Church's care but agents of Christian worship; they come not only to receive grace from God but also to give him all honor and glory.