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Newsletter

Committee on Divine Worship

Conclusion of the Jubilee Year of Hope



The Ordinary Jubilee Year 2025, dedicated to the theme “Pilgrims of Hope,” was concluded by Pope Leo XIV at St. Peter’s Basilica on January 6, 2026. The Holy Year ended in the particular Churches nine days earlier, on December 29,

2025, the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Millions of pilgrims journeyed to Rome and to diocesan pilgrimage sites around the world for a more poignant encounter with the mercy of the Lord Jesus and to recommit themselves to live in hope and to spread that hope to all whom they meet.

In the particular Churches, one image that will stand out from the Jubilee was the “Jubilee Cross” erected within each cathedral as a beacon of hope for the faithful. In Rome, the four Holy Doors were opened to draw in those seeking forgiveness of sins and renewal of spirit.

For the benefit of our readers as an enduring testimony of hope, we reprint the Holy Father’s concluding prayer before closing the Holy Door of Saint Peter’s Basilica:

We ask you, O faithful God:
Keep open the treasures of your grace
and grant us the strength to persevere in our new life
so that we may bear witness in the world
to the hope that does not disappoint.
And so, at the end of our earthly pilgrimage,
we may knock at the door of your house with confidence
and taste the fruits of the tree of life.
To you, almighty Father,
through Christ our Lord,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit
be all honor and glory, now and forever.
Amen.

- Pope Leo XIV, Prayer at the Closing of the Holy Door
of Saint Peter’s Basilica, January 6, 2026

Four Publishers to Produce One-Volume Major Extracts of the *Liturgy of the Hours*

After the selection of publishers to produce the full four-volume edition of the *Liturgy of the Hours, Second Edition*—announced in the November-December 2025 *Newsletter* as Ascension Press and Word on Fire Publishing—the Committee on Divine Worship reviewed proposals at its November 2025 meeting for the publication of major extracts of the Divine Office: one-volume editions with at least Lauds, Vespers, and Compline. Publishers of the four-volume edition were ineligible to apply.

Four publishers have been selected, pending the completion of the license agreement process, to receive five-year exclusive contracts for producing major extracts of the *Liturgy of the Hours*. They are: Catholic Book Publishing

Corp., Liturgical Press, Magnificat, and Midwest Theological Forum. More information will be released by each publisher in the coming weeks and months and be reprinted in a future issue of the *Newsletter*.

The USCCB Secretariat of Divine Worship is devoting 2026 and the first half of 2027 to the publication of the four-volume editions of the breviary. Once that process is complete, work will turn to the review and publication of the one-volume major extracts; they are expected to go on sale in mid-2028. In addition, various minor extracts of the Divine Office—*General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours*, Daytime Prayer, Compline, etc.—will be published at some point during 2027 or 2028.

USCCB Strengthens Liturgical Ties with Vietnam

Vietnamese is the third-largest language spoken and prayed among Catholics in the United States, after English and Spanish. A recent pilgrimage to Vietnam afforded the USCCB Secretariat of Divine Worship an opportunity to develop closer contacts with its counterparts in the southeast Asian country.

Mr. Matthew M. Godbey of the Secretariat met on January 8, 2026 with four representatives of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Vietnam at its headquarters in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon): Bishop Peter Tùng Công Kiều of Phát Diêm, Chairman of the Committee on Divine Worship; Bishop Emmanuel Sơn Hồng Nguyễn of Ba Rịa, former Committee Chairman; Rev. Joseph Vũ Nguyễn Đào, former Chief of Staff; and Mr. Tâm Bùi, executive assistant to the Committee on Divine Worship.

The meeting began with the presentation of a letter of greeting from Bishop Michael G. Woost, Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Divine Worship, along with a gift on behalf of the Committee. Major points of discussion included the implementation of the Vietnamese *Roman*

Missal, Third Edition and its distribution in the United States; processes in both countries for review and copyright licensing of Vietnamese liturgical texts; upcoming liturgical-pastoral projects; technical assistance; and the fostering of ongoing communication and collaboration between the liturgical offices of both Conferences.

During the pilgrimage, Godbey encountered the vibrant joy and youthfulness of the Church in Vietnam and took part in several liturgical celebrations, a number of which that were enhanced by unique cultural practices: burning of incense sticks before Mass and at other popular devotions, the use of gongs and drums, bowing at the Sign of Peace, and especially the cantillation of Mass texts known as *đọc kinh*, taking advantage of the natural musicality of the Vietnamese language. It is hoped that greater understanding of the liturgy in Vietnam and working with its Conference of Bishops in the faithful implementation of ritual texts and music settings will lead to deeper appreciation of the gifts that Vietnamese Catholic communities bring to the whole Church in the United States.

Pope Leo XIV Begins Use of New Pastoral Staff

At the concluding Mass of the Jubilee Year on January 6, 2026, Pope Leo XIV introduced a new pastoral staff created for his use. In continuity with the staff created in 1965 by Lello Scorzelli for Pope St. Paul VI and used by subsequent Popes, the new *ferula* maintains a curved shape for the cross but introduces a new corpus of Christ.

According to a description by the Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff, the pastoral staff of Pope Leo XIV unites the “mission of proclaiming the mystery of love expressed by Christ on the Cross with its glorious manifestation in the Resurrection.” The new pastoral staff “presents Christ no longer bound by the nails of the Passion, but with his glorified body in the act of ascending to the Father. As in the appearances of the Risen Christ, it depicts the wounds of the Cross as luminous signs of victory that, while not

erasing human suffering, transfigure them into a dawn of divine life.”



Photo and description
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This expression of the Paschal Mystery becomes a sign of hope for humanity. It is therefore also significant that the Holy Father chose to begin use of his new *ferula* at the conclusion of the Jubilee Year of Hope as a visible symbol of the hope that does not disappoint (cf. Rom 5:5). The staff is also inscribed with the Pope's motto, *In illo Uno unum* (“In the one Christ, we are one”), thus uniting in text and imagery his magisterium of unity and communion. The papal liturgical celebrations office observes, “With this sign in his hands, the Pope symbolically recalls that humanity in Christ already sits at the right hand of the Father, in the relationship of love of the Trinity, and that the darkness of the world cannot overcome the victory of life over death.”

Understanding the Order of the Anointing of the Sick and of their Pastoral Care: Viaticum

With the publication of the revised edition of the *Order of the Anointing of the Sick and of their Pastoral Care* (ASPC), the *Newsletter* continues a 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 article explores Chapter III, Viaticum. (Portions of this article first appeared in “Administration of Viaticum to the Sick by Ordinary and Extraordinary Ministers,” published in two parts in the July-August and September 2023 issues of the *Newsletter*.)

Theology

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), Viaticum is “the last sacrament of the Christian” (no. 1524). Through this sacrament, the dying person receives the “seed of eternal life” and is strengthened by the Lord’s promise of resurrection: “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day” (Jn 6:54). Viaticum is a special sign of the Paschal Mystery, Christ’s Passover from death to resurrection, which is celebrated in every Mass (ASPC, no. 26). The CCC compares the unity of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist in Christian Initiation to the sacraments of Penance, Anointing of the Sick, and Viaticum celebrated during a serious illness, which are “the sacraments that prepare for our heavenly homeland” or “the sacraments that complete the earthly pilgrimage” (no. 1525). Additionally, for the dying the sacraments of Penance and Anointing culminate in the reception of the Eucharist as Viaticum.¹

Minister

The ordinary and usual minister of Viaticum is a priest with the care of souls, that is, a pastor, a parochial vicar, a chaplain, and, with regard to those living in a religious house, a superior of a clerical religious institute or society of apostolic life (ASPC, no. 29).² The administration of Viaticum is among those functions especially entrusted to pastors.³ When necessity requires it or with the presumed permission of the competent minister, any priest or deacon may administer Viaticum, and in the absence of an ordinary minister, any duly appointed lay person may do so (ASPC, no. 29).⁴ Ministers should not delay in administering

Viaticum, and those with care of souls are to be zealous and vigilant that the sick are nourished by the Sacrament while still conscious (ASPC, no. 27).⁵

Recipient

The recipient of Viaticum is a member of the Christian faithful who is in danger of death from any cause; those who are able to receive Holy Communion are obliged to receive Viaticum (ASPC, no. 27).⁶ While Anointing of the Sick is to be received by those who are in danger of death because of sickness, mental illness, or old age, Viaticum may be given to those who are in danger of death from any cause—not only from intrinsic ones like sickness but also from extrinsic sources like capital punishment. In light of the meaning of Viaticum as “the last Sacrament of the Christian” (CCC, no. 1524), it is fitting that it be received when the danger of death is proximate or imminent (ASPC, no. 93). Thus, in the course of a serious illness, the general pattern is: the reception of Penance whenever necessary, the Anointing of the Sick when one begins to be in danger of death (*in periculo mortis*)⁷, Viaticum when one is in imminent or proximate danger of death (*in proximo periculo mortis*), and the Apostolic Pardon at the point of death (*in articulo mortis*). Were death to become imminent for a person, even if one has already received Holy Communion that day, one is strongly encouraged to receive the Eucharist again as Viaticum.⁸ Some canonists propose that the Eucharist as Viaticum should be administered only once to a dying person, who on the following days would receive the Eucharist as Holy Communion.⁹ Presumably, the rite of

¹ Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter *Samaritanus bonus*, no. 10: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 112 (2020), 938.

² Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, canon 911 §1.

³ Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, canon 530 §3.

⁴ Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, canon 911 §2.

⁵ Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, canon 922.

⁶ Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, canon 921 §1.

⁷ Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 73. Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, canon 1004 §1; CCC no. 1514.

⁸ Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, canon 921 §2.

⁹ Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, canon 921 §3; cf. “The Eucharistic Celebration (cc. 899-933)” in *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, ed. John P. Beal et al. (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2000), 1115.

Viaticum would be celebrated again if the dying person recovers and subsequently becomes seriously ill.

Rite

Before the celebration of Viaticum, ministers catechize the sick person about the liturgy and their participation in it. They also prepare and arrange the celebration in light of the sick person’s condition and insofar as possible with the sick person or their family (ASPC, nos. 36-37). If possible, the celebration of Viaticum takes place during Mass in order to maintain the connection between participation in the Eucharist and reception of Holy Communion and so that the sick person may receive Communion under both kinds (ASPC, no. 26); all others present may receive Communion under both kinds as well (ASPC, no. 96). When permitted by the rubrics, the Ritual Mass “For the Administering of Viaticum” or the Votive Mass of “The Most Holy Eucharist” may be used, and the readings are taken from the *Lectionary for Mass* (vol. IV, nos. 796-800) or Chapter VII, “Various Texts to Be Used in the Rites for the Sick.” In the administration of Viaticum outside of Mass, only the species of bread is administered except for those who are unable to receive it. In these cases, some of the Precious Blood may be reserved after Mass, transferred to a closed vessel which excludes any possibility of spilling, and then brought to the sick person. Viaticum may be administered outside of Mass on any day of the year, even Holy Saturday,

the day when the Church abstains from the sacrifice of the Mass and the reception of Holy Communion.

The rites for the administration of Viaticum are also included in Chapter IV and Appendix IV, “The Order of Offering the Sacraments to a Sick Person Who Is in Imminent Danger of Death” and “The Emergency Rite of Penance, Viaticum, and Anointing,” respectively. While the Sacraments in Danger of Death follows the general pattern articulated above, the Emergency Rite differs because of the condition of the sick person. Because the danger of death is pressing (*instante mortis periculo*), the pattern changes: an opportunity for Penance, the administration of Viaticum, and, if time remains, the Anointing of the Sick.

The rite consists of six parts: the Introductory Rites, the Reading of Sacred Scripture, the Profession of Baptismal Faith, the Litany, Viaticum, and the Concluding Rites. Particular to ordinary ministers is the greeting, “The peace of the Lord be with you,” or other greetings from the Order of Mass. The rite for use by Priests (and with some modifications by Deacons) includes a sprinkling rite, an opportunity for sacramental confession, and the Apostolic Pardon, which are all absent from the rite used by extraordinary ministers. The final blessing differs in the two rites, and ordinary ministers may bless the sick person with the Blessed Sacrament, if any remains.

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