

Dear Co-laborers in the vineyard,

Thanks to all who have written and shared their appreciation for this newsletter. I am glad you have found it useful. If there is information that you would like to see here, or specific questions that would be good to answer in this forum, please let me know. This is your newsletter – please let me know how I can make it more helpful.

Blessings,

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FOR YOUR INFORMATION...

“How to Celebrate Christmas as a Catholic”

The USCCB Committee on Pastoral Practices would like to recommend the pamphlet, “How to Celebrate Christmas as a Catholic” from Our Sunday Visitor as a way to “assist the Catholic faithful in their observance of the Advent and Christmas Seasons, in view of the often frenetic pace of American life and the increasing sense of materialism within our society.” The pamphlet, available in both English and Spanish, is available directly from OSV at 1-800-348-2440, ext. 3.

Diocesan Choir

I was wondering if there was any interest in putting together a diocesan choir to minister at major celebrations—such as the Chrism Mass, Rite of Election, and ordinations? Please let me know if you would want to be part of such an undertaking.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Close of the Year of the Eucharist

The Year of the Eucharist ends on October 23 with the close of the World Synod of Bishops. The Synod will meet in Rome from October 2-23 on the topic: “The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church.”

It would be fitting to observe the meeting of the Synod and the close of the Year in some way. Possibilities include:

- Evening (or Morning) Prayer with Exposition / Adoration / Benediction
- Votive Mass: 3. Holy Eucharist
- Masses for Various Needs and Occasions: 5. For a Council or Synod

Of course, the Synod should be mentioned in the Prayer of the Faithful while in session.

LITURGY PREPARATION

INTERCESSIONS

Intercessions for Life

These intercessions are provided by the USCCB for your use. Please adapt them as you see fit.

- Oct. 2 For the little child who lives in his mother's womb: that our love might shepherd him to birth; we pray to the Lord:
- Oct. 9 For young people in high school or college: that they might learn to give thanks to God for the gift of life he has given them; we pray to the Lord:
- Oct. 16 For those who have grown weak with age and sickness: that we might cherish their presence in our midst, as a sign of God's care for us; we pray to the Lord:
- Oct. 23 For the justices of the Supreme Court, that as their term begins, they may defend the right to life of each and every person; we pray to the Lord:
- Oct. 30 For those who work for the Gospel of Life: that God might grant them the grace of patient endurance; we pray to the Lord:

Ordination

"It is the duty of all the faithful of the diocese to assist the candidates for the diaconate by their prayers. This duty is fulfilled especially in the Prayer of the Faithful (Universal Prayer) at Mass and in the intercessions of Vespers" (*Rites of Ordination*, #179; see also #15 & 103). Therefore, please include Bruce DeRammelaere, who is scheduled to be ordained to the diaconate for our diocese on November 5, in your intercessions. For example:

For those called to serve the church in ordained ministry, especially Bruce De Rammelaere; we pray to the Lord:

For our seminarians, and for those who will be ordained this year, especially Bruce De Rammelaere; we pray to the Lord:

Madagascar

As the diocese continues to strengthen its relationship with the Archdiocese of Antsiranana, Madagascar, it would be good to remember our sisters and brothers of that island nation in our prayers. As specific needs are made known, I will offer them here for your use. In the meantime, perhaps intercessions such as these might be used:

For the people of Madagascar, for those working for just and sustainable development; we pray to the Lord:

For the Archdiocese of Antsiranana and for all who share the Gospel in Madagascar; we pray to the Lord:

LITURGICAL CALENDARLiturgical Year 2006

The following lists the Holy Days and variable solemnities for 2006.

November 27, 2005	First Sunday of Advent (Year B-II)
December 8, 2005	Immaculate Conception*
December 25, 2005	Christmas*
January 1, 2006	Mary, Mother of God*
January 10, 2006	Begin Ordinary Time
March 1, 2006	Ash Wednesday – Lent begins
April 16, 2006	Easter Sunday
May 28, 2006	Ascension*
June 4, 2006	Pentecost
August 15, 2006	Assumption*
November 1, 2006	All Saints*
November 26, 2006	Christ the King – last Sunday of the liturgical year

*Holy Day of Obligation

Advent & Christmas

Advent, and the new liturgical year, begin on November 27th this year. I provided Advent guidelines here last month; what follows are guidelines for Christmas—with documentation regarding the placement of the crèche.

1. God reveals God's self to us as the One who loves us. The feast days during Christmas remind us of this revelation and seeks our response to it.
2. The color is white or gold, and it is ideal if vestments and fabrics used are different from those used at Easter.
3. A good Penitential Rite is Rite C, #iii.
4. Sing the Gloria the entire season. The carol "Angels We Have Heard On High" may not replace the Gloria.
5. Christ is present here and now. TODAY is born our Savior. Avoid historicizing. For example, use Christmas music with good theology for the whole season (ex. Hark the Herald Angels Sing) and avoid historical settings (O Little Town of Bethlehem).
6. Make sure your decorating reflects all that is important: the Word, the people...Enhance the whole building, not just the sanctuary. Remember: less is more!
- 7 Remember that Advent and Christmas are the perfect times to remember Mary, our ultimate model for behavior.

8. There are two customary proclamations used during the Christmas Season The deacon, reader, or cantor may sing/proclaim these texts, which may be found in the *Sourcebook for Sundays and Seasons* from Liturgy Training Publications:

- a. At Christmas Midnight Mass, after the greeting and introduction, the “Proclamation of the Birth of Christ” is sung or proclaimed. The Gloria immediately follows.
- b. On Epiphany, the “Proclamation of the Date of Easter” is sung or proclaimed after the homily or after the prayer after communion.

9. The crèche does not go under the altar or even in the sanctuary. Check out the Book of Blessings, chapter 48. It is OK to put out a crèche that represents the whole story. There is no need to have "traveling kings".

The following citations from liturgical law and documents may be helpful in deciding where to place the Christmas Crèche in the church.

GENERAL INSTRUCTION OF THE ROMAN MISSAL

299. In every church there should ordinarily be a fixed, dedicated altar, which should be freestanding to allow the ministers to walk around it easily and Mass to be celebrated facing the people.

BOOK OF BLESSINGS

1544. If the manger is set up in church, it must not be placed in the presbyterium. A place should be chosen that is suitable for prayer and devotion and is easily accessible by the faithful. (The presbyterium is that part of the church where bishops, priests and ministers perform their ministry. This would be the altar, ambo [pulpit], and presidential chair area of the sanctuary. The placement of the crib should not interfere with the dignity and function of these areas. Likewise, the crib should not impede a minister from getting to the tabernacle.)

BUILT OF LIVING STONES: Art, Architecture and Worship Guidelines of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

124. Plans for seasonal decorations should include other areas besides the sanctuary. Decorations are intended to draw people to the true nature of the mystery being celebrated rather than being ends in themselves. Natural flowers, plants, wreaths and fabric hangings, and other seasonal objects can be arranged to enhance the primary liturgical points of focus. The altar should remain clear and free-standing, not walled in by massive floral displays or the Christmas crib, and pathways in the narthex, nave, and sanctuary should remain clear.

125. These seasonal decorations are maintained throughout the entire liturgical season. Since the Christmas season begins with the Vigil Mass on Christmas Eve and ends with the Baptism of the Lord, the placement and removal of Christmas decorations should coincide with these times.

128. Objects such as the Advent wreath, the Christmas crib, and other traditional seasonal appointments proportioned to the size of the space and to the other furnishings can enhance the prayer and understanding of the parish community.