



DIOCESE OF ALTOONA-JOHNSTOWN

Office of Liturgy
925 South Logan Boulevard
Hollidaysburg, PA 16648
Telephone: 814-693-9870
Fax: 814-696-9516

December 6, 2016

MEMO

TO: Clergy

FROM: Monsignor Robert C. Mazur

CONCERNING: (1) January 23, 2017 and January 26-27, 2017
(2) Dates of Ecumenical Services
(3) Week of Christian Unity
(4) Easter Vigil 2017
(5) Winter Ordinary Time Bulletin Liturgical Inserts

(1) Monday, January 23, 2017 - Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children

The anniversary of the Supreme Court decision, *Roe vs. Wade* is January 22, 1973. On Monday, January 23, 2017 all dioceses in the United States of America will observe a Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children. The Roman Missal contains a special Mass under the options for Various Occasions entitled, "For Giving Thanks to God for the Gift of Human Life", #48 both A and B would be appropriate selections. Also, the Eucharistic Prayer for Use in Masses for Various Needs IV (contained within the Roman Missal) would be an appropriate selection for Mass. There are a variety of readings suggested in the Ordo. White or violet vestments are worn for this particular Mass.

Thursday, January 26, 2017 - Prayer at Altoona Cathedral

On Thursday, January 26, 2017 at 7:00 P.M. in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Altoona, Bishop Mark Bartchak will lead a prayer service for the anniversary of the Supreme Court decision of *Roe vs. Wade* (1973). There will be a blessing for the pilgrims attending the March For Life in Washington, D.C. the next day, **Friday, January 27**. All are welcome to participate in this prayer. All who have a respect for life from conception to natural death are welcome to join our brothers and sisters at the Altoona Cathedral. **Due to the Inaugural Year, the March for Life was moved to Friday, January 27.**

Prayer on January 23 - RESPECT for LIFE

God our Creator, we give thanks to you, who alone have the power to impart the breath of life as you form each of us in our mother's womb; grant, we pray, that we, whom you have made stewards of creation, may remain faithful to this sacred trust and constant in safeguarding the dignity of every human life. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Possible Petition for the weekend of January 21/22 for Universal Prayer:

*That the Church continue to proclaim life's value and dignity,
and that our lives manifest the conviction of this teaching, we pray to the Lord...*

(2) **Dates of Ecumenical Services**

Clergy are asked to vest in alb and white (anniversary) stole. Below are copy-ready bulletin inserts.

On Sunday, January 22, 2017, Bishop Mark Bartchak of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown will host an ecumenical service at Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, One Cathedral Square, Altoona, Pennsylvania. The service begins at 2:00 P.M. All are invited to participate in this prayer.

On Sunday, January 29, 2017, Bishop Michael Rhyne of the Lutheran tradition will host an ecumenical service at Mount Calvary Lutheran Church, 1000 Scalp Avenue (Richland), Johnstown, Pennsylvania. The service begins at 2:00 P.M. Bishop Mark Bartchak will be in attendance. All are invited to participate in this prayer.

Clergy are encouraged to participate in these two prayer services for Christian unity. Invite members of your faith community to join in this prayer. You may place the appropriate boxed announcement in your bulletin to inform your people.

(3) **Week of Christian Unity**

Parishes are encouraged to sponsor, along with other Christian churches, Prayer Services for Christian Unity. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins on Wednesday, January 18, and concludes on Wednesday, January 25. The Book of Blessings, numbers 553 through 573, is a great resource for such an ecumenical service.

The Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute suggests *RECONCILIATION—The Love of Christ Completes Us* (2 Corinthians 5:14-20) as the theme for the Week of Christian Unity 2017. A sample prayer service and information are available at: www.geii.org

Possible Petition for Sundays, January 15 and 22, for the Universal Prayer:

*That the Christian Family seek the unity that Christ won for all
through his death and resurrection, we pray to the Lord...*

(4) **Easter Vigil 2017**

Saturday, April 15th, sunset is at 7:53 PM Daylight Saving Time. The Easter Vigil is to begin no earlier than **8:30 PM Daylight Saving Time** on **April 15, 2017**.

(5) **Winter Ordinary Time Bulletin Liturgical Inserts**

This liturgical year the Liturgy Office is providing liturgical inserts that will discuss the revised *Order of Celebrating Matrimony*. These inserts will reflect on the theology of matrimony, the gift of married couples in the Church, and the different aspects of the revised ritual. You are asked to place these inserts in your weekly bulletin for the liturgical catechesis of our people. Thank you.

WINTER ORDINARY TIME 2017

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ORDER OF CELEBRATING MATRIMONY

Liturgical Reflection...

The Church has revised the **Order of Celebrating Matrimony** (2016). In the introduction to the rite of marriage, the Church states that a Marriage is established by the conjugal covenant, that is the irrevocable consent of both spouses, by which they freely give themselves to each other and accept one another. Moreover, this singular union of a man and a woman requires, and the good of the children demands, the complete fidelity of the spouses and the indissoluble unity of the bond. The Church is graced with the love and commitment of our married couples.

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Liturgical Reflection...

Monday, January 23, all dioceses in the United States of America are observing a Day of Prayer for the **Legal Protection of Unborn Children**. January 22 is the day of the anniversary of the Supreme Court decision, *Roe vs. Wade* (1973), the Church in America prays for the violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion, and of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee to the right to life. Members of the Diocese are encouraged to go to Mass on this day, pray the rosary, the chaplet of Divine Mercy, fast and abstain, and join the Altoona-Johnstown family in praying the following:

O God, who adorn creation with splendor and beauty, and fashion human lives in your image and likeness, awaken in every heart reverence for the work of your hands, and renew among your people a readiness to nurture and sustain your precious gift of human life. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

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ORDER OF CELEBRATING MATRIMONY

Liturgical Reflection...

In a time when the Sacrament of Marriage is not celebrated as often as in preceding decades, the Church holds up the holiness and dignity of the sacramental covenant between a man and a woman. The matrimonial covenant, by which the two spouses establish a life-long partnership between themselves, derives its force and strength from creation as proclaimed in the Book of Genesis. And for the Christian faithful it is raised up to a higher dignity, since it is numbered among the Sacraments of the new covenant.

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ORDER OF CELEBRATING MATRIMONY

Liturgical Reflection...

In the revised **Order of Celebrating Matrimony** (2016), the Church states that children are the supreme gift of Marriage and contribute greatly to the good of the parents themselves. The ultimate crown of Marriage is procreation and the formation of children in the faith. The love of husband and wife is a creative love and, with God's presence, new life is born of the love of the married couple. The intimate community of life and love between the spouses is holy and divine. Married love is communal and results in the creation of the human family.

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ORDER OF CELEBRATING MATRIMONY

Liturgical Reflection...

Jesus Christ has restored Marriage to its primordial form and holiness in such a way that what God has joined together, no one may put asunder. As Matthew's Gospel witnesses, "Thus they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, let no one separate what God has joined (19:6)". Jesus, Lord and Savior, has given us the high dignity of Marriage. Man and woman enter into an indissoluble union which is preordained by God. This divine union is a model for the faithful who seek unity with God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and oneness with each other in the community of the Church.

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ORDER OF CELEBRATING MATRIMONY

Liturgical Reflection...

In the revised **Order of Celebrating Matrimony** (2016), the Church states that God has raised the indissoluble conjugal contract between husband and wife to the dignity of a Sacrament so that it might signify more clearly and represent more easily the model of Christ's own nuptial covenant with the Church. Christ is the Bridegroom and we, the Church, are his Bride. By the Sacrifice on Calvary, this covenant can never be broken. Man and woman in the Sacrament of Matrimony en flesh the divine relationship between Christ and the people of God.

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ORDER OF CELEBRATING MATRIMONY

Liturgical Reflection...

By the Sacrament of Matrimony Christian spouses signify and participate in the mystery of unity and fruitful love between Christ and the Church. Man and woman, both in embracing conjugal life and in accepting and educating their children, help one another to become holy. As a married couple they have their own place and particular gift among the People of God. The faithful are enriched by the example of the married couple who give themselves wholeheartedly and unselfishly to one another. The love of God is visibly seen in the love of husband and wife.

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ORDER OF CELEBRATING MATRIMONY

Liturgical Reflection...

In the revised **Order of Celebrating Matrimony** (2016), the Church states that it is the Sacrament of Baptism that has incorporated a man and woman into life with Christ. Baptism, the Sacrament of faith, invites husband and wife to enter into the covenant of Christ with the Church. The conjugal love of the spouses is assumed into Christ's charity and enriched by the power of his Sacrifice. Thus, the valid Marriage between the baptized is always a Sacrament. The covenant love between man and woman is held in the highest esteem. Husband and wife model the love of God and his people.

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