

Ember Saturday Mass of Advent



SOLEMN MASS IN THE EXTRAORDINARY FORM

*Saturday, December 22nd
9:00 A.M.*

**St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church
118 South Seventh Street
Oberlin, LA 70655**

This Mass is an excellent opportunity to observe the days of prayer and penance, known as Ember Days, that Bishop Provost has recently established by particular law for the Diocese of Lake Charles. In this ancient Mass you will join together with clergy so that, with one heart, we will make reparation for sins and pray for the increased sanctification of the clergy.

What are Ember Days?

By an ancient and immemorial practice of the Roman Church, each of the seasons in the yearly circle of the Earth around its star is sanctified by the Church on what are known as Ember Days, or in Latin *quatuor tempora*, meaning “the four times”. On the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday of these four weeks, which were spread out roughly at the change of each season, both the clergy and the lay faithful would offer to God the tribute of prayer and fasting for three purposes: **first**, to thank Him for the blessings of the season just past and to ask for blessings on the season to come; **second**, in reparation for sins and asking grace to reform life going forward; and **third**, for the sanctification of the clergy.

The origins of the Ember Days are ancient and venerable. The great liturgical historian Dom Prosper Guéranger notes that the Apostles probably took these times of prayer and fasting over from the Jews (*The Liturgical Year*, vol. 1, 218). The *Didache*, a First Century document attributed to the Twelve Apostles, notes that early Christians fasted each **Wednesday** (the day the Lord was betrayed) and **Friday** (the day He was crucified and died) of the week. In Rome, the observance would later also be extended to **Saturday** (the day Christ “slept” in the tomb). In order to “keep vigil with Peter,” Saturday prayer and penance found its way beyond Rome. Indeed, there is ample historical evidence affirming the observance of the Ember Days in the Roman Rite at least since the 200s.

As noted above, placing special emphasis on prayer for the sanctification of the clergy became an essential part of the Ember observance. Over time, and in Rome, the custom developed of ordaining priests on the Saturdays of Ember Seasons. This was both reasonable and appropriate given that Roman Catholics throughout the world were engaged in prayer and penance for the clergy. And does not the present crisis call out for a similar observance? It was none other than **St. John Vianney**, the patron saint of priests, who once taught: “One ought to pray earnestly, especially at the Ember Seasons, that God will give us good priests. If they are saints, what great good they can do!”

Since the year 1969, regrettably, the observance of the Ember Days in the universal Church is no longer fixed in the calendar. Recently, however, Bishop Provost has made the observance of prayer and penance on Ember Days particular law in the Diocese of Lake Charles. In doing this he has joined a number of other Bishops who have either encouraged or mandated some form of Ember observance in their dioceses. Accordingly, Catholics in the Diocese of Lake Charles will be required to observe prayer and penance on the Ember Days.

How should I observe the Ember Days?

In general, extra prayer and the observance of penance will be necessary on these days. Speaking more specifically though, and in accordance with the guidelines provided by the Office of Liturgy of the Diocese of Lake Charles, these *recommendations* are made for your consideration:

Prayer

1. Attend holy Mass on each Ember Day.
2. Make a holy hour before the Blessed Sacrament, or at least a brief visit, on each Ember Day.
3. Pray the Rosary, preferably as a family, on each Ember Day.
4. Make prayers of reparation for the sins of the clergy, for the clergy’s sanctification, for the conversion of sinners, for the strengthening of faith for all Christians, and for the healing of victims of abuse on each Ember Day.

Penance

1. Observe **partial abstinence** each Ember Wednesday and Saturday.
 - a. Partial abstinence: meat and soup or gravy cooked with meat permitted once a day at the principal meal.
2. Observe **complete abstinence** each Ember Friday.
 - a. Complete abstinence: the total abstinence from meat and soup or gravy cooked with meat by those 14 years of age and older. (Until 1966, the requirement to abstain from meat began at 7 years of age.)
3. Fasting from food.
 - a. Those age 18-59 will limit food intake to one full meal and, if needed, two collations (“snacks”), which when combined, do not exceed a full meal on each Ember Day.
4. Fasting from media.
 - a. Other than for work, make a complete and total fast from all electronic media on each Ember Day.

List of the Ember Days in A.D. 2019

- Dec. 19th, 21st, 22nd (**2018**); March 13th, 15th, 16th; June 12th, 14th, 15th; Sept, 18th, 20th, 21st; Dec. 18th, 20th, 21st