

PASTORAL REMINDERS FOR CELEBRATING HOLY WEEK AND THE TRIDUUM IN 2010

ARCHDIOCESE OF BOSTON - OFFICE OF WORSHIP AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

As Holy Week quickly approaches, it seems appropriate at this time to send out this pastoral reminder for Holy Week and Triduum. This pamphlet is intended to be used as a resource for preparing for the celebrations during Holy Week. As such, we include the relevant rubrics and such suggestions that are pertinent to the most important celebration of the liturgical year.

PASSION SUNDAY — March 28

The blessing of palms and procession may take place only once, before the principal parish Mass. Ideally the congregation assembles in a place distinct from the main church for this rite. Participation sheets with the music and responses for the procession are helpful. Ministers of Hospitality benefit from rehearsal and clear communication of the requirements for this liturgy. The procession need not move directly to the church, but go by a longer route to the main doors. The route should be traced beforehand, with attention to potential trouble spots: the visibility of the processional cross and banners, accessibility, audibility, the cleanliness of the grounds. The Sacramentary gives two other forms, namely a solemn and simple entrance, to provide for those situations when it is not possible to have the procession. Whatever form is used, palms should be distributed prior to the blessing, not after Mass.

The Passion proclamation occupies a special place in today's Mass. The readings which prepare for it should not be omitted, and a brief liturgical homily is required to unfold its riches. The proclamation needs careful preparation. If the Passion is divided into parts for the assembly, it is important to check the accuracy of the texts. It is acceptable to divide the Passion into narrative sections, with different readers, and varying postures, silence, and sung acclamations. The Passion is not enacted as a play, rather it is proclaimed with reverence and simplicity, without candles, greetings, incense, or the sign of the cross.

Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers provides prayers for the placing of palms in the home. Many parishes regularly provide simple rituals from this book and the Book of Blessings as bulletin inserts.

Concerning the covering of crosses and statues during Holy Week. On November 14, 2001

the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops approved the following rubric for Holy Week:

“in the Dioceses of the United States of America, crosses in the church may be covered from the conclusion of the Mass for Saturday of the Fourth Week of Lent until the end of the celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday. Images in the Church may be covered from the conclusion of the Mass for Saturday of the Fourth Week of Lent until the beginning of the Easter Vigil.”

WHAT ARE THE THREE DAYS OF THE TRIDUUM?

The Paschal Triduum is the culmination of the entire liturgical year, spanning three days, beginning with the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, reaching a high point at the Easter Vigil, and concluding with Evening Prayer on Easter Sunday. Traditionally, Friday and Saturday of the Triduum are held together by the paschal fast. The Triduum may be presented as a single feast of three days duration, and the community be urged to celebrate from beginning to end. Thus, the assembly gathered for the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper is meant to reassemble for the Lord's Passion, and again for the Vigil.

Every effort should be made to plan the celebrations of the Triduum as an integrated whole, including this encouragement of the assembly and its ministers to enter into the unity of the three-day celebration. Several parishes conduct a liturgical catechesis during the first few days of Holy Week. The texts of the Triduum are the primary source for this catechesis, as well as the ritual actions and symbols of the Triduum. Many people are happy to spend time together reviewing the “road-map” for the week's celebrations. The catechesis for each liturgy may be followed by a rehearsal for its ministers.

DURING THE TRIDUUM . . .

Funerals and Marriage:

On Thursday, Friday, and Saturday the Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass is celebrated. The proper rite is found in the Order of Christian Funerals (OCF) pars. 183-223. Mass is offered for the deceased as soon as possible in the Easter season. The celebration of marriage is strictly forbidden during the Triduum.

Pastoral Care of the Sick:

Anointing of the Sick and Viaticum for the dying may be celebrated during the Triduum. Communion for the sick may be celebrated on Holy Thursday and Good Friday if necessary, but never on Holy Saturday. It is most appropriate to take communion to the sick directly from the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Reconciliation:

It is strongly urged that opportunities for Reconciliation be available frequently before the Triduum, but not during the Triduum. Candidates for full communion, in particular, should be given the opportunity to celebrate this sacrament before the Triduum.

Liturgy of the Hours:

Morning Prayer may be celebrated on Friday and Saturday. This should take place with the full participation of the assembly.

THE EVENING MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER – April 1

Preparation:

The Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper begins the Sacred Triduum and is the only Mass to be celebrated this day. The Sacramentary and Lectionary do not contain texts for a Mass at another hour of the day, nor may the Evening Mass be celebrated earlier in the day. Therefore, another Mass should not be celebrated on Holy Thursday except for the most serious pastoral reasons, such as the inability of the community to gather at night. Such a Mass may only be celebrated with the permission of the Archbishop. The Liturgy of the Hours provides a model for prayer during the daytime for parishes and schools where gatherings of the faithful for prayer are desired.

Liturgy:

The sacred oils, blessed at the Chrism Mass, may be carried in worthy vessels in the procession of the gifts before the bread and wine and presented with the appropriate texts. Sufficient oil for these vessels should be obtained at the Chrism Mass. It is not permitted to add additional oil or perfumes to the consecrated oil.

The Washing of the Feet, as an element of the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, should be enacted in such a way that it does not overshadow the essential aspect of this celebration which is the Eucharist. Thus, proper planning and preparation should be done to ensure that the washing of feet occurs in a timely manner and does not unduly diminish the celebration of the Eucharist.

Catechumens and Elect are dismissed in the usual manner. At the beginning of the liturgy of the Eucharist, there may be a procession of gifts for the poor.

Communion under both species is especially recommended at the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper. Careful rehearsal of the rite is required for the presider, deacon, and eucharistic ministers if this is not the usual practice in the parish. The communion rite on this night should stand out as the central action and the pre-eminent liturgical rite.

There is no dismissal at the closing prayer, since the Paschal Feast continues, just as there is no greeting at the Good Friday liturgy. The liturgies of the three days flow together seamlessly.

For the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, a place should be prepared in a simple manner. Before the liturgy, the tabernacle is entirely empty, the doors open, and the vigil light removed. If the tabernacle is already situated away from the central axis of the church, it may serve as the place for adoration. The Precious Blood is never reserved.

Following the Liturgy:

After the transfer of the Blessed Sacrament, the altar of celebration is stripped without ceremony and, if possible, crosses are removed or covered.

Solemn adoration may continue until midnight. John 14-17 may be read aloud. Many parishes conclude the period of adoration by singing Night Prayer together.

CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S PASSION – April 2

Preparation:

The Celebration of the Lord's Passion is to take place at about 3:00 p.m. For pastoral reasons, another time between 12:00 noon and 9:00 p.m. may be chosen. The Office of Readings and Morning Prayer may be celebrated today, but Evening Prayer is not prayed by those who participate in the principal liturgy.

Liturgy:

The entire paschal celebration is bathed in the light of the resurrection, and the cross is proclaimed in this liturgy as the victorious cross of Christ. Today we bear witness to the victory, kingship and glory of Christ shining forth from the cross.

The act of prostration by the priest and ministers should be strictly observed.

The Liturgy of the Word is the original and primary part of this day, and should be prepared with great care. Several readers may be used to advantage, as long as the appearance of a play is avoided. John's narrative of the Passion is integral to the Rite: no other narrative is permitted. In preaching and proclamation, great care must be taken on Good Friday for the responsible presentation of the Jewish people. "God's Mercy Endures Forever: Guidelines on the Presentations of Jews and Judaism in Catholic Preaching" from the NCCB (1988) is particularly helpful. For the General Intercessions, attention is called to the detailed options indicated in paragraphs 10-13 of the Sacramentary.

One cross of "appropriate size and beauty" is used. For the 'Showing of the Cross' detailed options are given in paragraphs 15-17. For the 'Veneration of the Cross' this same cross is to be used, following the details of paragraphs 18-20. Only one cross should be used for the veneration, with lighted candles on either side, as this contributes to the full symbolism of the rite. If it is large enough and set up in the midst of the assembly, processions of the faithful may approach from several directions at once.

Holy Communion is celebrated according to the Sacramentary (par. 21 and following). After the liturgy, provision should be made to reserve the sacrament for Viaticum in a separate place. The tabernacle of the church is to remain empty until after communion at the Easter Vigil.

In planning for the Triduum, we must consider how to include the children in the prayer of the Church. Possibilities for school age children include Midday Prayer or Stations of the Cross, participation in preparing the church building, and catechetical assemblies.

Following the Liturgy:

After the celebration, the altar is stripped. The cross of veneration remains, however, with four candles.

THE GREAT VIGIL – April 3

THE VIGIL MAY NOT BEGIN BEFORE NIGHTFALL. In the Boston area in 2010, sunset on Holy Saturday occurs at 7:12 p.m. with nightfall about one hour later. The service therefore cannot begin before 8:00PM. There is no pastoral discretion granted for pastors on the timing of the Easter Vigil earlier than Nightfall. This rule is intended to be interpreted in its strictest sense. **The Office for Worship recommends that the Easter Vigil begin no earlier than 8:00 p.m.**

Service of Light:

As far as possible, the assembly gathers outside for the introductory rites at the new fire. If a large fire is lighted prior to the liturgy, local fire authorities should be notified. In the procession to the darkened church, those who are to be baptized do not carry candles. A paschal candle made of wax, new every year, and sufficiently large, is mandatory. Artificial candles with inserts and liquid wax in plastic cylinders are prohibited. The Easter Proclamation is sung by a priest, deacon, or a cantor.

Liturgy of the Word:

The nine readings of the vigil trace key events in salvation history, understood in the light of the Easter proclamation. At least three readings must be read. The reading of Exodus 14 may not be omitted. A variety of ways of proclaiming the lessons and singing the responses will sustain the attention of all. Generous silence follows each reading, sung response, and prayer.

Christian Initiation at the Vigil and in Eastertime

The National Catechetical Statutes from the NCCB and confirmed by the Holy See make it clear that it is preferable not to have baptism of catechumens and reception of candidates together in the same Vigil, lest the primary place of baptism be obscured. Candidates for Full Communion may be

received at the Masses of Easter Sunday or another Sunday during the Easter Season. Some parishes have only candidates and these are received, confirmed, and receive Eucharist at the Vigil.

If you baptize and confirm adult catechumens at the Vigil the rites are found in RCIA 206-251.

If you receive already baptized adults into full communion with the Catholic Church and confirm them at the vigil or on another suitable day, the rites are found in RCIA #487-498.

If you decide both to baptize catechumens and receive candidates into full communion you must use the “combined rites” found in RCIA Appendix I, 4 #562-594. Experience has shown that this combined rite is challenging to prepare and celebrate.

If you baptize infants (under 7 years) at the Vigil you must use the Rite of Baptism for Children #56-64.. The baptism takes place after the blessing of water. The introductory rites can be anticipated earlier in the day. You may not confirm baptized infants. It is very complex and confusing ritually to celebrate adult and infant baptism together. You should do this only for serious pastoral considerations, e.g. the initiation of family members together.

Parish musicians should be aware of the tremendous increase in the repertoire for the Vigil, particularly for Christian Initiation. The Litany of the Saints, the Blessing of the Water and Baptismal Acclamations have many pleasing settings. The Litany should be prepared with attention to the patron saints of those being initiated, and the patrons of the parish and its ethnic communities.

Immersion is the preferred method of baptism. If the permanent font does not allow for immersion (with the candidate actually standing or kneeling in the water), temporary arrangements are advisable. A careful rehearsal of this rite with presider, ministers, and sponsors is always helpful. The Elect are not included in these rehearsals, but are entrusted to the guidance of their godparents. In celebrating the Sacraments of Initiation, take care that the assembly can witness the rites. Invite the assembly to gather around the font, and make sure the rites are visible and audible.

In the Communion Rite, before “This is the Lamb of God,” the presider may remind the neophytes and newly received of the preeminence of

the Eucharist, which completes their initiation. There are texts for this in the RCIA #243, and #594.

The paschal candle is placed near the altar or ambo and lighted during all liturgical actions until Pentecost Sunday. After the Easter Season, the paschal candle should be placed in the baptistry.

EASTER DAY – April 4

Mass should be celebrated with great solemnity. Every attempt should be made to see that every Mass is celebrated with appropriate music, especially the acclamations of the assembly, careful attention to ritual, and sufficient well-prepared ministers.

Parishes which typically experience an influx of visitors on Easter are encouraged to prepare the Mass schedule with hospitality in mind. If overflow Masses in another setting such as a hall or lower church are anticipated, these should be prepared with attention to environment, music, and ministries.

The renewal of baptismal promises and accompanying sprinkling of the assembly with blessed water replaces the Creed at all the Easter Sunday Masses. Assisting ministers may sprinkle side aisles and transepts, or a procession of the faithful to the font may be preferred.

The restoration of “Baptismal Vespers” to complete the Triduum has been received successfully in a variety of pastoral settings. This is an appropriate way of the community and its neophytes to sustain the joy of the Vigil.

THE EASTER SEASON

For the neophytes and newly received, the importance of mystagogical catechesis is paramount. In some parishes, they gather for a reflective catechesis around the font on the second Sunday of Easter. Parishes blessed with numbers of catechumens and candidates need to plan carefully for the quality of prayer, continued catechesis, and celebration which give shape to the Easter season.

The Octave of Easter constitutes an eight-day Solemnity. Each day, the texts focus on the witness of the first disciples and our own experience of the Risen Lord. Neophytes and faithful alike are guided to the heart of the Easter mystery. Parishes which have enhanced their daily Mass schedules in Lent are encouraged to sustain these new patterns at least through the Octave, and to encourage the daily Mass community of Lent to remain together through the Octave.