

THE LITURGIES OF THE EASTER TRIDUUM 2010

Note: This information was included in the current issue of *The Collect*, the quarterly newsletter of the Office for Divine Worship. If you would like to receive future issues of *The Collect*, please contact Sr. Rene Simonelic at rsimonelic@odw.org.

Introduction to the Easter Triduum

The rites for Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil as found in the *Sacramentary* and *Lectionary* are to be used in all parishes of the Archdiocese of Chicago. Clergy, planners and musicians should study the texts and rubrics carefully.

The ideal is to have only one parish celebration on each of these days. Services for small, homogeneous groups or religious communities are generally discouraged and, in some cases, not permitted. When a parish has more than one language group, a second service in another language or languages is permitted if judged pastorally necessary. In some situations it may be possible and beneficial to have a single service making use, in text and song, of two or more languages. This can help to unify a community in celebrating together the heart of the Christian year.

On Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday, no funeral Masses may be celebrated. On these days the body of the deceased may be brought to the church for a Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass (*Order of Christian Funerals*, #177—203). At the request of the family, this rite may be held, instead, at the funeral home. The funeral Mass for the deceased should be offered as soon as convenient after Easter Sunday. At this Eucharist, the final commendation is omitted. The celebration of marriage is not permitted during the Triduum.

Lectors, musicians, servers, homilists and all ministers who participate in these liturgies should be selected because of excellence in their ministry; they should be well trained. Non-liturgical services, such as concerts, should in no way detract from the preparation of music and liturgy for the Vigil, for Thursday's Mass of the Lord's Supper and Friday's Celebration of the Lord's Passion.

The very heart of the Triduum is the Vigil; for there the fasting, prayer and scripture culminate in the celebration of initiation: baptism, confirmation and eucharist. This celebration by the local church presumes that the faithful and catechumens have journeyed together toward this night. Parishes that have not yet begun the full practice of the catechumenate are reminded that the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is mandated for use in all the dioceses of the United States. Ritual books and materials for implementation are available in English and Spanish through Liturgy Training Publications.

The whole time from Thursday evening to Sunday evening is to be kept by the Church and not only in the liturgies. From Thursday evening until after the Easter Vigil, the whole Church is invited to fast: "Let the paschal fast be kept sacred. Let it be observed

everywhere on Good Friday and, where possible, prolonged throughout Holy Saturday, as a way of coming to the joys of the Sunday of the Resurrection with uplifted and welcoming heart" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, #110).

Holy Thursday

The evening Mass of the Lord's Supper should be celebrated at the most suitable evening hour. There may be a liturgy on Thursday morning only "for those who are *in no way* able to take part in the evening Mass." Thus the ideal is a single Holy Thursday Mass in a parish, and only the inability of space to accommodate those who wish to attend should suggest the possibility of a second Mass. The private offering of any Mass is strictly forbidden.

The washing of feet or *mandatum* is the norm for all parishes. This rite should be characterized by its simplicity, allowing the powerful gesture of the servant Christ to model for us the charity and humility required of all Christ's disciples. Parish staffs should strive to carry out the *mandatum* reverently and graciously and should avoid other rites and statements of commitment, which are inappropriate at the liturgy of Holy Thursday. Concelebration is, however, entirely appropriate, so that every ordained priest may celebrate the Eucharist on Holy Thursday. The renewal of priestly commitment from the Chrism Mass is not to be used at the Mass of the Lord's Supper, nor should there be any attempt to imitate the Jewish Seder on Holy Thursday.

The *Sacramentary* instructs that the collection of gifts and money today be for the poor.

The tabernacle should be empty before the liturgy today. Enough hosts should be consecrated at this Mass for Communion today and tomorrow. Though Holy Communion may be brought to the sick today, Communion may be distributed at the church itself only within the Mass.

Following the Prayer after Communion, the Holy Eucharist is transferred to the place of reposition. This may be the usual tabernacle if it is in an area removed from the altar, but a space separated from the central part of the church is preferred (*Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts, Congregation for Divine Worship, 1988, #49*). The rite for this procession is described in the *Sacramentary*.

"The faithful should be encouraged to continue adoration before the Blessed Sacrament for a suitable period of time during the night, according to local circumstances, but there should be no solemn adoration after midnight" (*Sacramentary*). The nature of the Triduum before the Easter Vigil is that of prayer and vigil. The faithful are encouraged to keep the paschal fast and to engage in private and communal prayer, carrying over into their homes the spirit of these sacred days.

After Mass, the altar is stripped. It is fitting that any crosses in the church be covered with a red or purple veil. Votive candles should not be lit before the images of saints (*Circular Letter, #57*)

Good Friday

The celebration of the Lord's Passion should take place about 3:00 pm but for pastoral reasons may be at a later hour or as early as 12 noon. The service may be repeated only when the number wishing to attend would be too large for the church. The parish priest is the appropriate minister for this solemn liturgy. The liturgy for Good Friday makes no provision for any form of concelebration, since it is not Mass. Assisting ministers, however, including priests, may be vested.

Communion is distributed only within the Liturgy of the Lord's Passion but may be taken to the sick at any time of the day.

A collection is taken today for those pastoral, charitable, educational and social works that the church supports in the Holy Land for the welfare of Christians and local communities as well as the upkeep of the holy places. This collection may best be taken through a basket placed near the entrance, because the liturgy itself has no collection.

Proceeds are to be forwarded to the Financial Office of the Archdiocese of Chicago by May 17, 2010.

The readings are to be read in their entirety. The Passion according to John is not to be replaced by other Passion narratives, nor should it be turned into a dramatization that distorts the message of John's narrative. The homily should not overlook the positive thrust of John's gospel in portraying Christ as victor and Lord.

The general intercessions are to follow the wording and form handed down by ancient tradition, maintaining the full range of intentions, so as to signify clearly the universal effect of the passion of Christ, who hung on the cross for the salvation of the whole world (*Circular Letter, #67*).

The veneration of the cross is most effective when only one cross is used. Music during the veneration can reflect the spirit of the antiphons provided in the ritual: "We worship you, Lord, we venerate your cross, we praise your resurrection. Through the cross you brought joy to the world" (Sacramentary).

Though parishes may plan other services during the day and evening of Good Friday, it should be clear from the announcement of the schedule and from the care taken for the liturgy that the Celebration of the Lord's Passion has priority.

Communion visits to the sick are best done earlier in the week and on Easter.

There is strong encouragement that the fasting prescribed for Friday continue voluntarily through Saturday until the Vigil.

Easter Vigil

"The entire celebration of the Easter Vigil takes place at night. It should not begin before nightfall; it should end before daybreak on Sunday" (*Sacramentary*). In 2010, sunset on April 3, in Chicago will occur at 7:17 pm, cdt. **The Easter Vigil therefore should not begin before 7:30 pm.**

The Easter Vigil is the only liturgy that may be celebrated this night. All other Easter Masses are to be celebrated on Sunday morning or afternoon. The paschal candle should be worthy in size and beauty befitting its role in the liturgy this night, throughout the Easter season, and at the celebration of baptism and burial throughout the year. Candles that are metal or plastic forms refilled by smaller candles are inconsistent with the candle's symbolic role.

The reading of the Word of God is, in the words of the *Sacramentary*, "the fundamental element of the Easter Vigil." Though the number of readings from the Old Testament may be reduced, this is discouraged. The readings and the Psalms should be given the greatest care in preparation and execution.

The tabernacle is empty for the Vigil. All hosts for Holy Communion are to be consecrated at the Vigil. Communion under both kinds is the norm.

The Triduum is concluded liturgically with Vespers on Easter evening.

Sacraments of Initiation at the Vigil

When adults are baptized at the Vigil, the liturgy attains its fullness, for there is the paschal mystery of the Lord's dying and rising present in our midst. When there are no adults to be baptized, the parish may celebrate the baptism of infants at the Vigil. The preparation of the baptismal liturgy should provide for its beauty, dignity, and for the full participation of the assembly. Planners and clergy will need to work with both the *Sacramentary* and the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. The fullness of the rite of baptism is experienced when immersion is possible, or at least the pouring of water over the entire body.

Those who are baptized (except infants) or received into full communion with the Catholic Church are to be confirmed immediately by the priest at the Vigil liturgy. This includes children of catechetical age (Canon 883.2, and U.S. Statutes, #14, and Archdiocesan Policy book IV, §103.12.1.). Adults who are being received into full communion with the Catholic Church during the Vigil liturgy appropriately receive the Sacrament of Penance at an earlier time (before the Triduum).

Confirmation of Baptized Catholics at the Vigil

Baptized Catholics who have been catechized, that is, who have received their First Communion but have not been confirmed, are ordinarily *not part of the RCIA and should*

not be confirmed at the Vigil, but rather should be confirmed by the bishop at a liturgy other than the Easter Vigil. Likewise, a practicing Catholic already integrated into a parish's life is not to receive confirmation during the rites of initiation at the Vigil.

Any persons who were baptized into the Catholic Church but were never catechized (that is, who have not received First Communion), and who have participated in a process related to the catechumenate, may be confirmed by the priest at the Vigil *if explicit delegation is obtained from the Office for Canonical Services*. This delegation is *required for the validity* of the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The Paschal Triduum leads us to the Easter season, the fifty days from Easter Sunday until Pentecost. This is the Church's most festive season, and it deserves to be kept as a special time of joy and celebration for Catholics with its special prayers and music, its customs and its scriptures.