

# LITURGICAL DIRECTIVES FOR LENT AND EASTER

## Water in Baptismal/Holy Water Fonts

The practise of removing water from baptismal/holy water fonts during Lent was popular for a time in many parishes. This is not supported by Church liturgical legislation and Lent is not the time for us to abstain from sacramental signs. A baptismal spirituality is a fundamental focus of this season, called to mind in the scriptural and liturgical texts. A longstanding practise of the Church, however, has been to empty and clean the holy water fonts on days of the Triduum in preparation for the Easter Vigil, which also corresponds to those days on which the Eucharist is not celebrated.



## Covering Statues and Crosses

In the Dioceses of Canada, the practice of covering crosses and images throughout the church from the Fifth Sunday of Lent may be observed. Crosses remain covered until the end of the celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday, but images remain covered until the beginning of the Easter Vigil, (cf. Roman Missal, p. 239).

## Flowers

During Lent the altar and sanctuary are not to be decorated with flowers. Exceptions to this are on the Fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday), solemnities and feasts (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal/GIRM, n. 305; Ceremonial of Bishops, n. 252*). The Liturgical environment may be planned using the primary Lenten color of violet, and also materials from the local natural landscape to enhance the various rites and rituals of this season, e.g. Sundays of Lent, penitential services, rites of the RCIA, Stations of the Cross, etc.

## Music

In order that the penitential character of the season is preserved, the playing of the organ and musical instruments are allowed only to support the singing. Exceptions are on the Fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday) and on solemnities and feasts (*GIRM, n. 313*). The *Gloria* is not sung or recited during Lent until Holy Thursday, except for solemnities and feasts. A greater use of silence during the liturgy may be highlighted in this season.

## Holy Week

### Reading the Passion

The Passion narrative on Palm Sunday and Good Friday occupies a special place in the liturgy. It should be proclaimed in the traditional way, that is, by three persons who take the part of Christ, the narrator and the people. The Passion is proclaimed by deacons or priests, or by lay readers; in the latter case, the part of Christ should be reserved to the priest (January 16, 1988, Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, *Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts-Paschalis Solemnitatis, n. 33*). Since it is a Gospel reading, the appropriate posture for the assembly is standing, unless an individual is physically prohibited. An invitation to sit during this time is incompatible with the attitude conveyed by the liturgy, that is, union with Christ in his suffering and death. Furthermore, the proclamation of scriptures was never meant to be a read-along, e.g. dividing the Passion into roles shared by the assembly. Though this practise has been encouraged in various resources, consider setting it aside and inviting the assembly to listen attentively to the Passion proclaimed. Sections may be separated with periods of silent reflection and acclamations which all can sing.

## Holy Oils

Each year when the Archbishop blesses the oils and consecrates the chrism, pastors should see that the old oils are properly disposed of by burning and that they are replaced by the newly blessed oils. A suggestion is to burn the old oils in the Easter Vigil fire. To be excluded is the diluting of the oils merely to fill the volume of oil for display in the ambry.

## Receiving the Holy Oils in the Parish

A reception of the oils may take place at the Mass of the Lord's Supper. In the procession of the gifts, before the bread and wine, the oils are presented in suitable vessels by members of the assembly. A text for this reception will be forwarded to parishes by the Archdiocesan Liturgy Commission.

## Easter Triduum

Where a dignified celebration of the entire Triduum would be impeded because of the small number of participants or an insufficient number of people to fulfill the ministries with the requisite solemnity, the faithful should then assemble in a larger church. Where a pastor has care of numerous small faith communities, it is recommended that such parishes should assemble if possible in a principal church for the celebrations. The celebrations of the Triduum should only be repeated in separate churches where numbers warrant and the capacity exists for proper celebration of the rites (cf. *Paschalis Solemnitatis*, n. 43; *Roman Missal*, p. 280).

## Holy Thursday

The Mass of the Lord's Supper is celebrated in the evening with the full participation of the whole parish community and with the clergy exercising their proper ministry. Any Masses without a congregation are certainly prohibited on this day.

## Mandatum

After the Homily, where a pastoral reason suggests it, the Washing of Feet follows. The Priest (removing his chasuble if necessary) goes to each one, and, with the help of ministers, pours water over each one's feet and then dries them. An appropriate song(s) may be sung during this ritual gesture) (*RM*, p. 282, nos. 10,11,12)

In order that the full meaning of this rite might be expressed to those who participate it seemed good to the Supreme Pontiff Pope Francis to vary the norm which is found in the rubrics of the *Roman Missal* (p. 282, n. 11): "**The men who have been chosen are led by the ministers...**", which therefore must be changed as follows: "**Those who are chosen from amongst the people of God are led by the ministers...**" so that pastors may select a small group of the faithful to represent the variety and the unity of each part of the people of God. Such small groups can be made up of men and women, and it is appropriate that they consist of people young and old, healthy and sick, clerics, consecrated men and women and laity, (*Decree, Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments*, 6 January, 2016, Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord).

The significance of this rite does not relate so much to the *exterior imitation* of what Jesus did, but rather to *the meaning of what he has accomplished* which has a universal importance, namely the giving of himself *to the end* for the salvation of the human race, his charity which embraces all people and which makes all people brothers and sisters by following his example. (**+Archbishop Arthur Roche, Secretary, Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments**).

Jesus' action of washing the feet of his disciples was unusual for his gesture went beyond the demands of hospitality or ritual purity (washing of hands) to what was by all appearances a menial act of servitude. For this reason, to safeguard the power of the symbol, it is inappropriate to substitute the washing of the feet with the washing of hands.

## Tabernacle

The tabernacle should be empty before the liturgy begins. Enough bread should be consecrated at the Mass of the Lord's Supper for this liturgy and for Good Friday. The Blessed Sacrament is to be reserved in a closed tabernacle. ***Under no circumstances may it be exposed in a monstrance and the consecrated wine is not to be reserved for distribution on Good Friday.*** Holy Communion may be given to the faithful only during Mass, but may be brought to the sick at any hour of the day. Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament on Holy Thursday should not continue past midnight.

## The Uniqueness of Holy Thursday Reservation

1. The uniqueness of Holy Thursday reservation and adoration is their unmistakable link with the eucharistic action, that is, communion in the Lord's Supper. The purpose of reservation is primarily for reception.
2. The consecrated elements are substantially identical with the body and blood of Christ not as he once was at any moment in past history, but as he now is for all eternity in risen glory.
3. In effect, the Mass of Holy Thursday is a Mass with two communions—one that evening, the other on the next afternoon. Reservation connects the two, looking back to the one and forward to the other. Thus Holy Thursday and Good Friday go together in the same way that the supper and the cross go together.
4. If Holy Thursday night and Good Friday afternoon go together, even as do supper and the cross, the divide in the Triduum is between the end of the Good Friday liturgy and the start of the paschal vigil. This is the time of waiting for the dawn of the third day when Christ will rise, never to sleep in death again.

## Good Friday

The central celebration of this day is the Good Friday Liturgy of the Lord's Passion. Holy Communion is distributed to the faithful only during this liturgy, though it may be brought at any time of the day to the sick who cannot take part in the celebration.

### Reasons for the reception of Communion on Good Friday

1. Without communion on Good Friday the reservation of the sacrament on Holy Thursday loses its purpose. But without reservation there can be no adoration.
2. Without communion the liturgical connection between that afternoon and the previous evening would be broken and the rationale for including the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper as part of the Triduum would be hard to defend.
3. In Good Friday communion it is Christ who is received not as he once was in past historical time but as he lives forever in risen glory—the victorious victim whose passion is his passage to the Father.
4. Communion prevents the Good Friday liturgy from collapsing into mere subjective recall of an event in past history. To receive the body of Christ is to feed on his ever-living reality.

Devotions such as the Way of the Cross or other popular processions of the passion or commemorations of Our Lady's Sorrows are admirable pieties but in no way should they substitute for the solemn liturgical action. Nor should aspects of the various acts of piety be mixed with the Good Friday celebration, creating a hybrid (*Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy*, Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 2002).

## **Easter Vigil**

### **Time for Easter Vigil**

The Easter Vigil is a nocturnal vigil, retaining its ancient character of vigilance and expectation; it begins *in darkness* and at an hour later than the usual anticipated Sunday Mass (*Paschalis Solemnitatis*, n. 78). It is not permissible to celebrate the Easter Vigil more than once in a given church or to anticipate the Mass of Easter before the Vigil.

### **Paschal Candle**

This candle should be made of wax, never be artificial, be renewed each year, and be of sufficiently large size that it may convey the truth that Christ is the light of the world. The Paschal Candle is the symbol of the "light of Christ, rising in glory," scattering the darkness of sin and death. Choice of size, design, and colour should be made in relationship to the sanctuary in which it will be placed. Preferably placed near the ambo, it should be lighted for all liturgical celebrations of the Easter season (cf. *Paschalis Solemnitatis*, n. 82).

### **Readings**

The Readings of the Easter Vigil give the account of the outstanding deeds of salvation history. Meditation on these readings is so significant for this night that we are strongly urged to use all the readings whenever it can be done. Only in the case of serious pastoral necessity are the readings to be reduced in number, and if such is the case at least three readings from the Old Testament are to be proclaimed, always including Exodus 14, (cf. *Paschalis Solemnitatis*, n. 85).

### **Tabernacle**

The tabernacle is empty for the Easter Vigil. All bread that will be used for Holy Communion is to be consecrated at the Vigil, offering us the model of what should happen at every celebration of the Eucharist throughout the year. Holy Communion under both species is strongly encouraged to give full expression to the sacramental sign.

### **Exposition and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament**

Exposition and solemn adoration of the Blessed Sacrament are prohibited during the Sacred Triduum, except for the evening of Holy Thursday when solemn reservation and adoration (not exposition) is permitted from after the Mass of the Lord's Supper until midnight.

## **Easter Season**

### **Liturgical Environment**

The primary liturgical symbols of this season are the baptismal font, the blessed water, the Paschal Candle and the altar. The Candle, reminder of the risen Christ, remains in the sanctuary until Pentecost inclusive. It is always preferable to decorate with live flowers and greens as these more aptly remind the Christian faithful of the gift of life God has given to the human community.