

## **CELEBRATION OF THE EASTER TRIDUUM** **LITURGICAL GUIDELINES**

The Easter Solemnity was revised and restored by Pius XII in 1951; the order of Holy Week, in 1955. Over the years the concept of the Vigil has waned in some areas resulting in the fact that the celebrations of the Triduum are not held at the correct times. Other difficulties also arise at times. To clarify the situation, the Congregation for Divine Worship sent out a document in January, 1988: "Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feast." The document recalls certain doctrinal and pastoral elements and various norms already published concerning Holy Week.

This Diocesan Guideline reflects these norms and elements in an outline form for your convenience and reference. A copy of the complete circular letter is available upon request at the Office of Liturgical Education, Diocese of Las Cruces, or you may obtain a copy directly from USCC/NCCB.

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### I. The Lenten Season

The Lenten Season has a two-fold character.

1. To prepare catechumens by means of the Rite of Election, Scrutinies and by catechesis, for the celebration of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults).
2. To prepare the faithful through the Word of God, prayer, and penance for the renewal of their baptismal promises.

#### A. Celebrations during the Lenten Season

1. Sundays of Lent take precedence over all feasts and solemnities.
  - a. Solemnities are observed on the preceding Saturday; e.g., Annunciation.
  - b. Weekdays have precedence over obligatory memorials.
2. The Lectionary is to be the primary source for homilies related to the paschal mystery and the sacraments.
3. Every occasion should be utilized in explaining the Word of God; i.e., weekday homilies, celebration of the Word of God, penitential celebrations, various family gatherings. Weekday Mass is urged for the faithful along with private readings of the daily scriptural lessons.

4. The faithful are to be encouraged to approach the sacrament of reconciliation during the Lenten season. Communal penance services with individual confession and absolution are strongly encouraged in every parish during this season.
5. Lenten observances should witness to and foster the life of the local church.
6. The altar and sanctuary should not be decorated with flowers (See next section I-B, #5). Musical instruments may be played only to give necessary support to the singing.
7. The Alleluia is to be omitted in all celebrations, even solemnities and feasts.
8. All chants and hymns are to reflect the spirit of the season and the liturgical texts.
9. Devotional exercises in harmony with the Lenten season are to be encouraged; e.g., "The Stations of the Cross."

#### B. Days of Lent

1. The faithful are to receive ashes on the Wednesday before the first Sunday of Lent.

The blessing and imposition of ashes should take place either in the Mass or outside the Mass. If outside the Mass, it is to be part of a Liturgy of the Word and conclude with the prayers of the faithful.

2. Ash Wednesday is to be observed as a day of penance in the whole church, with both abstinence and fasting.

The laws of fast and abstinence are obligatory on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Those who have reached their fourteenth year are required to abstain from meat on these two days. Those who have reached eighteen and up until the beginning of their sixtieth year are bound by the laws of fast and abstinence on these two days. Abstinence from meat is also to be observed by all Catholics 14 years old and older on all Fridays of Lent.

If for medical reasons or type of labor, fasting or abstinence would be detrimental to the person's health, the person should substitute some other form of penance. Our younger people are also bound to do penance, and some type of self-denial should be entered into by them -- perhaps greater effort at studying, being more patient, etc.

To abstain (abstinence) means that the party obliged (fourteen and over) must on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday avoid the eating of meat (flesh of warm-blooded animals). The better opinion of moral theologians is that condiments derived from animals is not included. Therefore, frying in lard or using lard as a spread would be acceptable.

To fast is to take only one principal meal during the day and two other meals, not equal in quantity (combined) to the principal meal. There should be no "snacks" between meals, although liquids may be taken. Milkshakes, etc., are considered as food rather than liquids because of the nutritional value.

3. The first Sunday of Lent marks the beginning of the annual Lenten observance. The Rite of Election is celebrated by the bishop in the cathedral or another designated church.
4. In parishes where there are catechumens, the readings of Cycle A may be used.
5. On the fourth Sunday of Lent and solemnities and feasts, musical instruments may be played and flowers may be used as decorations.

Rose colored vestments may be worn on the fourth Sunday (Laetare).

6. Crosses and images may be covered. If covered, crosses remain covered until the end of the celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday. Images remain covered until the Easter Vigil begins.
7. The Lenten Season lasts until the beginning of the Lord's Supper on Thursday of Holy Week.

## II. Holy Week

The days of Holy Week, from Monday to Thursday inclusive, have precedence over all other celebrations. (It is not fitting to celebrate baptisms and confirmations on these days.)

Easter Triduum begins with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, continues through Good Friday, reaches its summit in the Easter Vigil and concludes with Vespers of Easter Sunday.

### A. Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday)

#### 1. Procession

Traditionally, a solemn procession commemorates Jesus' triumphal entrance into Jerusalem. Only one solemn procession may take place in any church, preferably before the Mass which has the largest attendance. The assembly should gather in a place other than the church. In the procession the faithful are to carry a palm or other branches. The priest and ministers, also carrying branches, precede the people. The palms are to be blessed so that they can be carried in procession. They should be taken home as a reminder of the victory of Christ.

- a. When a solemn procession cannot take place outside the church, the form of a solemn entrance may be used.

- b. A simple entrance should be used at all other Masses which do not have a solemn procession or entrance. During the procession, choir and people should join in singing chants, especially psalms 23 and 46, as well as appropriate songs to Christ the King.
2. Reading of the Passion
- a. The Passion should be sung or read in the traditional way; that is, by persons who take the part of Christ, the narrator, and the people. If the passion is proclaimed by lay readers, the part of Christ is reserved to the priest.
  - b. The proclamation is done without candles or incense.
  - c. The Passion should be proclaimed in its entirety. The preceding readings are not to be omitted.
  - d. A homily is to be given.

B. The Penitential Celebration in Lent

The Lenten season should conclude with a penitential celebration. However, these celebrations should take place before the Easter Triduum and not immediately precede the Holy Thursday Mass.

III. Easter Triduum

The Easter fast is sacred on the first two days: Good Friday and Holy Saturday.

- A. Good Friday is a prescribed day of fast and abstinence and Holy Saturday is a recommended fast so that the church, with uplifted and welcoming hearts, can be ready to celebrate the feast of the Resurrection.
- B. The Office of Readings and Morning Prayer formerly called "Tenebrae" are recommended for Good Friday and Holy Saturday, especially when possible in the cathedral.
- C. Ministers and assistants are to be carefully prepared so that they know their role in the celebration. The faithful are to receive explanations so that they may participate fully and fruitfully.
- D. The chants are of special importance and are to be sung whenever possible to add to the solemnity and effectiveness of the celebration.
  - 1. Those parts which are always to be sung.
    - a. General Intercession of Good Friday, the deacon's invitation, and the acclamation of the people.

- b. Chants for showing and veneration of the cross.
  - c. Acclamation during procession with the Paschal candle, the Easter proclamation, the responsorial "Alleluia," the Litany of the Saints, and the acclamation after the blessing of water.
2. Sung texts for the faithful.
- a. Procession and blessing of palms and entrance into church.
  - b. Procession of Holy Oils.
  - c. Procession of gifts on Holy Thursday and the procession of the Blessed Sacrament to the place of repose.
  - d. Responsorial Psalms at the Easter Vigil and chants to accompany the sprinkling with blessed water.
  - e. Music should be provided for the Easter proclamation and blessing of the baptismal water. These melodies should be simple.
- E. Scheduling Celebration
- 1. Small religious communities and lay groups should participate in the Easter Triduum in neighboring principal churches.
  - 2. Where there are small parishes with only one priest, parishes should assemble in a principal church to participate in the celebration.
  - 3. Where a pastor has responsibility for two or more parishes in which the faithful assemble in large numbers and where the celebration can be carried out with care and solemnity, the celebrations of the Easter Triduum may be repeated.
- IV. Holy Thursday Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper
- A. This celebration recalls the Last Supper at which Jesus gave us his body and blood.
- B. The Mass of the Lord's Supper is celebrated in the evening at a time most convenient for full participation of the faithful. All priests may concelebrate even if they must celebrate another Mass.
- 1. The tabernacle should be completely empty before the celebration.
  - 2. Hosts for the communion of the faithful are to be consecrated during this celebration.
  - 3. Sufficient bread should also be consecrated for communion on Good Friday.
- C. For reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, a place should be prepared and adorned to be conducive of prayer and meditation.
- 1. In those churches that have a Eucharistic chapel separated from the central part of the church, it is appropriate to prepare the place of repose and adoration there.

2. The place of reservation must not resemble a tomb. The chapel of repose does not represent the "Lord's burial" but is for the custody of the Eucharistic bread to be distributed in Communion on Good Friday.

D. Celebration of the Mass

1. Bells may be rung during the "Gloria" and should remain silent until the "Gloria" of the Easter Vigil. The organ and other instruments may be used only to support the singing.
2. The washing of the feet is performed on this day.
3. Gifts for the poor, especially those collected during Lent, may be presented in the procession of the presentation of gifts.
4. It is appropriate that communion for the sick and infirmed be born directly by deacons, acolytes, extraordinary ministers at the moment of communion so that they can be more closely united to the celebrating church.
5. After the Final Prayer, the Blessed Sacrament is carried through the church to the place of reservation.

N.B. The rite of transfer of the Blessed Sacrament may be carried out only if the Liturgy of the Lord's Passion will be celebrated in the same church on Good Friday.

6. The Blessed Sacrament should be reserved in a closed tabernacle or pyx. It is never to be exposed in a monstrance.
7. The faithful should be encouraged after the Mass to spend time during the night in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament.
  1. Where appropriate the adoration may be accompanied by reading some part of the Gospel of John (chapters 13-17).
  2. After midnight the adoration should be made without external solemnity, for the day of the Lord's Passion has begun.
8. After Mass the altar should be stripped. Crosses not already uncovered are to be uncovered. Candles should not be lit before images of saints.

V. Good Friday

A. On this day the church:

1. meditates on the Passion of her Lord and Spouse,
2. venerates the Cross,
3. commemorates her origin from the side of Christ,
4. intercedes for the salvation of the world

B. The Church does not celebrate the Eucharist.

Holy Communion is distributed during the celebration of the Lord's Passion alone, although it may be brought at any time of the day to the sick.

C. Good Friday is a day of obligatory penance in the whole church and is to be observed with abstinence and fasting.

D. All celebrations of sacraments is strictly prohibited except for the sacraments of reconciliation and anointing of the sick.

E. The celebration of the Lord's Passion is to take place in the afternoon, at about three o'clock. The time is to be chosen for pastoral reasons to allow the people to assemble more easily after midday but before nine o'clock.

F. The Order of the Celebration of the Lord's Passion should be observed faithfully and religiously and may not be changed by anyone on his own initiative.

1. The Liturgy of the Word including the reading of The Passion and the General Intercessions.

2. The Adoration of the Cross. Only one cross should be used for the veneration. Appropriate songs may be sung. If the reproaches are used, appropriate catechesis should be given to help people understand that we, not the Jewish people, are the focus.

3. Holy Communion. The order is outlined in the missal. After distribution, the pyx is taken to a place prepared outside the church.

G. After celebration, the altar is stripped, the cross remaining with four candles. An appropriate place (for example, the chapel of repose used on Holy Thursday) may be prepared within the church. The Lord's cross is placed so that the faithful may venerate and kiss it and spend time in meditation.

H. Devotion, such as the Way of the Cross, processions of the passion, or commemorations of the sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary are not to be neglected. However, texts and songs should be adapted to the spirit of the liturgy of this day. They should be so scheduled to make clear that the Liturgical Celebrations by its very nature far surpasses them in importance (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, #13).

## VI. Holy Saturday

On this day the church is, as it were, at the Lord's tomb, awaiting his resurrection with prayer and fasting.

A. The Office of Readings and Morning Prayer are highly recommended. If these are not celebrated, some celebration of the Word of God or devotion suited to the mystery of the day should be celebrated.

- B. An image of Christ crucified lying in the tomb, his descent into hell, and also an image of the Sorrowful Mother may be placed in the church for veneration.
- C. The Church abstains strictly from celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass. Holy Communion may only be given in the form of Viaticum.

Celebration of marriage is forbidden as are also the other sacraments except reconciliation and the anointing of the sick.

- D. Festive customs and traditions associated with this day because of the former practice of anticipating Easter on Holy Saturday should be reserved for the vigil and day of resurrection.

## VII. Easter Sunday of the Lord's Resurrection

- A. The Easter Vigil is a nocturnal celebration. In this night the church keeps vigil, waiting for the resurrection of the Lord, and celebrates the sacraments of Christian initiation.

- 1. The entire celebration takes place at night. It should not begin before nightfall; it should end before daybreak on Sunday. It should not be celebrated at the time of day customarily set for the anticipated Sunday Mass.

- B. Structure of the Easter Vigil

The order has four parts:

- 1. service of light and Easter Proclamation,
- 2. the Liturgy of the Word,
- 3. baptism of new members (or renewal of baptismal promises),
- 4. liturgy of the Eucharist

The Liturgical Order must not be changed by anyone on his/her own initiative.

- 1. Service of Light: Wherever possible the new fire should be prepared outside the church.
- 2. Liturgy of the Word:
  - a. Wherever possible all seven Old Testament readings and the two readings from the New Testament should be read in order that the character of the Easter Vigil, which demands that it be somewhat prolonged, be respected at all costs.
    - 1. Where pastoral conditions require shortening the service, at least 3 readings from the Old Testament are to be read. The Exodus Chapter 14 reading with its canticle must always be read.
  - b. Each reading is followed by the singing of a responsorial psalm. The psalms are not to be replaced by trivial songs.
  - c. After the Old Testament readings the "Gloria in Excelsis" is sung and bells are rung in accordance with local custom.

- d. The Alleluia is sung either by priest or cantor.
  - e. The Resurrection of the Lord is proclaimed from the Gospel as the high point of the whole Liturgy of the Word.
  - f. A homily is to be given, no matter how brief.
3. Baptismal Liturgy
- a. We celebrate Christ's Passover and ours. Full expression is given where there is a baptismal font and the initiation of adults is held, or at least the baptism of infants. Even if there are no baptisms, baptismal water should be blessed either at the font or in the sanctuary. Baptismal water is to be kept in the baptistry throughout the paschal season.
  - b. The renewal of baptismal promises is introduced by the priest with the people making appropriate replies. All stand and hold lighted candles in their hands. They are then sprinkled with water.
4. The Liturgy of the Eucharist marks the Vigil's high point. The Eucharistic Liturgy is not to be celebrated in haste. All rites and words must be given their full force. These include:
- a. General intercession in which for the first time the neophytes exercise their priesthood.
  - b. Procession at the preparation of the gifts in which the neophytes take part.
  - c. The first, second, or third Eucharistic Prayer, preferably sung, with proper embolisms.
  - d. Eucharistic Communion, the moment of full participation in the mystery. Appropriate Communion songs might be Psalm 117 or Psalm 33 with Alleluia's or other songs of Easter exultation.
  - e. Communion under the species of both bread and wine.
- C. Pastoral Consideration
- 1. To respect authenticity of the sacred prayers and rites, the celebration should not take place without servers, readers, and choir exercising their roles.
  - 2. Small communities should assemble in one church so that a full and festive celebration can take place. The Easter Vigil is not to be celebrated for special groups. A sense of ecclesial community is to be emphasized. Any faithful absent from their parish by travel are encouraged to participate wherever they happen to be.
  - 3. The Easter Vigil is to be announced as the celebration "during Easter night" rather than the concluding period of Holy Saturday. The Easter Vigil is one single act of

worship and the faithful are to be taught to participate in its entirety.

D. Easter Day

1. Mass is celebrated with great solemnity. The sprinkling rite is recommended as the penitential rite throughout the Easter Season. The stoops (water bowls) at the entrance of the church should be filled with the water blessed at the Vigil.
2. Vespers on Easter Day is the formal close to the Easter Triduum and, where possible, is to be celebrated.
3. The paschal candle is placed either by the ambo or by the altar and is to be lit at all liturgical celebrations until Pentecost Sunday. After the Easter season the candle is to be kept in the bapistry and used at baptisms. In funerals the paschal candle is to be placed near the coffin. The paschal candle should not otherwise be lit nor placed in the sanctuary outside the Easter season.

VIII. Easter Time

The celebration on Easter is prolonged for fifty days from Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday.

- A. The Sundays of Easter precede all other feasts and solemnities. Any solemnity that falls on a Sunday of Easter is anticipated on the Saturday.
- B. For adults who received Christian Initiation, this period is given over to mystagogical catechesis. Intercessions for the newly baptized should be made in the Eucharistic Prayer through the Easter (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults).

It is appropriate that children receive their first communion on one of the Sundays of Easter.

- C. Canon 920 concerning the church's precept on the reception of Communion during this time is to be explained.
- D. Where there is a custom of blessing houses in celebration of the Resurrection, this blessing is to be imparted after the Solemnity of Easter, not before.
- E. Popular practices and devotions which at times seem to be more popular than the liturgy are not to be undervalued. Rather, efforts must be made to make them harmonize in the best way possible with the sacred liturgy.
- F. The Easter season of fifty days concludes with Pentecost Sunday. A prolonged celebration of the Mass in the form of a vigil of urgent prayer, after the example of the apostles and disciples who with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, awaited the Holy Spirit, is encouraged.