

# CELEBRATING THE PASCHAL MYSTERY: FROM ASH TO FLAME

## PREFACE

Every moment of human life is subject to the play of multiple rhythms of time, some daily, others weekly, monthly, yearly or seasonal. Annual rhythms include the calendar year, the financial year, the school year, the sporting year, and the cycle of nature's seasons. There are the seasons of life too – childhood, adolescence, adulthood, middle age and older years – punctuated by particular personal anniversaries such as birthdays, weddings, deaths.

### **The liturgical year**

For Christian believers there's another, more fundamental, rhythm. It's the calendar of faith, the annual cycle of feasts and seasons by which the church celebrates the mystery of Jesus Christ. The proper name for this is the "liturgical year" though this expression only became current in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Revised fifty years ago by authority of the Second Vatican Council, the liturgical year has become a familiar experience for regular church-goers.

The first Sunday of Advent heralds four weeks of preparation for Christmas Day and the Christmas season. The Advent-Christmas combination is followed by a relatively short season of Ordinary Time before Ash Wednesday ushers in the forty days of Lent. The observance of Lent culminates in the solemn celebrations of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil that lie at the heart of the year. The ensuing fifty days of the festive Easter season come to a glorious close on Pentecost Sunday. Finally the church embarks on the second and longer part of Ordinary Time, until the "end times" come into view and a new season of Advent begins.

### **From diversity to uniformity**

How did this yearly cycle come to pass? The original feast for the followers of Jesus was certainly the Sunday Eucharist. They came together on the Lord's Day to break bread in his memory. In time, local churches began to celebrate different facets of the saving mystery of Christ in the course of the year, but evidence from the first three or four centuries as to how this took place is tantalisingly sparse, fragmentary and difficult to interpret.

Diverse customs arose in different centres such as Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem and Rome and across different lands such as Syria, Spain and Gaul. As the centuries passed, there was cross-fertilisation between their liturgical practices, though Rome stood out by being generally resistant to innovation. All in all, this was an era of flux and diversity. The general shape of the liturgical year was established by the sixth century but only became definitive for the western church a thousand years later through the Council of Trent and the Missal of Pope Pius V in 1570.

### **The celebration of Easter**

By the second century the weekly assembly came to be complemented by an annual celebration of the paschal mystery. At first this Christian Pasch was celebrated in accordance with the Jewish calendar for Passover, on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Nisan, which could be any day of the week. After much controversy it was decreed by the Council of Nicaea in 325



that the commemoration of Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection should be held on Sunday rather than a weekday.

The annual feast of Easter quickly carried over into a week of celebration which further developed into a season of fifty days. Throughout this time the church rejoiced in the one great mystery of Jesus' victory over sin and death. It revelled in the new life of the Spirit. But the integrity of this unified season was lost when the Ascension of the Lord began to be celebrated on the fortieth day, leaving ten days to be spent waiting for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

### **The development of the Triduum**

The Easter celebration itself took the form of a night-time vigil, preceded by days of strict fasting. Once it was transferred to Sunday, the service began to focus more exclusively on the resurrection of the Lord. Accordingly, the preceding days of fast developed an identity of their own. Good Friday came to centre on Jesus' death, Holy Saturday on his burial. The once unified remembrance of the paschal mystery broke up into a series of separate observances. Later developments led to the Vigil being celebrated on Holy Saturday morning, with the addition of Holy Thursday creating a new Triduum of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday.



The evolution of these rites was aided and abetted by widespread imitation of the liturgies of 4<sup>th</sup> century Jerusalem. The Holy City had become a popular pilgrimage site. Devout Christians who visited during Holy Week experienced a series of liturgical events at sites associated with Jesus' passion, death and resurrection. On return home they introduced some of these rituals to their local churches. A number of them, such as the veneration of the cross, survive to this day.

### **The emergence of Lent**

The origins of the season of Lent are much less clear, though practices of fasting, preparation for baptism and the system of public penance certainly all played their part. There seems to have been great diversity as to when baptism was celebrated. In some places it was after the feast of the Epiphany, in others at Eastertime, in others again on the feast of Pentecost or at another time of the year. With the rise of infant baptism the adult catechumenate fell into disuse, as did the practice of public penance. The eventual outcome of this process was that Lent emerged as a season of repentance and renewal for the whole community prior to Easter, though traces of its earlier role remained. Surprisingly, the first official reference to the distribution of ashes to the faithful does not occur until 1091, and the name "Ash Wednesday" only dates from the sixteenth century, though the Lenten fast began on this day from the 7<sup>th</sup> century.



### **Decline and renewal**

By the time the Missal of Pius V was published in 1570 the liturgies of the Triduum had lost much of their significance. The Mass on Holy Thursday at which the bishop consecrated the holy oils was poorly attended, and the washing of feet took place after the Mass. The Good Friday liturgy focussed on Jesus' passion and death to the exclusion of resurrection, and worst of all, the Easter Vigil took place in the full light of day on the Saturday morning.

The trend to an earlier time can be traced back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century until the morning time was mandated in the Missal of 1570. The impetus of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century liturgical movement, however, led to the reform of the Vigil and Holy Week in the 1950s, foreshadowing the comprehensive renewal authorised by the Second Vatican Council.

The paschal triduum, extending from Holy Thursday evening to the evening of Easter Sunday, has been restored to its pride of place at the heart of the liturgical year. It is the centre-piece between six weeks of preparation (Lent) and seven weeks of celebration (Easter). There is a new integrity about these "great ninety days" even as the rites appropriate a great diversity of liturgical practices from different places and eras.



All this enables the whole Christian community to be immersed in the whole saving mystery of Jesus Christ: his ministry, suffering, death and resurrection, glorification and sending of the Holy Spirit. In this mystery the church becomes "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people," called out of darkness into God's marvellous light in order to proclaim God's mighty works (1 Pt 2:9).

### **PASTORAL NOTES**

The following pastoral notes on the liturgies of Lent, the Triduum and Easter are offered in order to assist parishes celebrate them well. They do not, in fact cannot, cover every detail. Local communities and liturgical teams must take their particular circumstances into account and make their own choice of the various options available. However the combination of history, general principles and select details presented here can serve as a helpful catalyst in the process of preparing these all-important celebrations.

The notes assume that the parish has a functioning liturgical planning team equipped with the personnel, knowledge, experience and skills needed for the preparation of worthy liturgical celebrations. A further and indispensable task for the team is the evaluation of the liturgies once they have been celebrated. The purpose of this is wholly positive. The questions to be asked are: what worked well? what could be done better next time? The aim of the exercise is to enhance the worthy celebration of the mysteries of faith for the sake of the whole worshipping community. It should be completed while the experience is still fresh in people's minds.

It must be noted that two major dimensions of these liturgies are referred to only in passing: music and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). This is a reflection of their importance, not the opposite. They are of such significance that they require explicit treatment in their own right, beyond the scope of this resource. The same goes for the scripture readings and prayers. Commentaries on these, especially the readings, are readily available elsewhere.

#### *Primary resources*

- The Roman Missal
- Lectionary for Mass
- Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

#### *Official resources*

- Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the Calendar
- Circular Letter *Paschalis Sollemnitatis* On Preparing and Celebrating the Paschal Feasts (Rome: Congregation for Divine Worship, 1988)
- *Catholic Worship Book II* (Melbourne: Morning Star Publications, 2016)

#### *Books on Holy Week and the Triduum*

- Paul Turner *Glory in the Cross: Holy Week in the Third edition of The Roman Missal* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2011)
- Lawrence Johnson *The Three Days: A Liturgical Guide* (Washington: Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions, 2012)
- Gabe Huck *The Three Days: Parish Prayer in the Paschal Triduum* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1992)
- Jeremy Helmes *Three Great Days: Preparing the Liturgies of the Paschal Triduum* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2016).

#### *General resources*

- G. Thomas Ryan *The Sacristy Manual* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2011)
- Rita Thiron *Preparing Parish Liturgies: A Guide to Resources* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2004)

## **THE SEASON OF LENT**

#### *Historical notes*

As noted in the introduction, the origins of Lent are rather obscure. A number of developments took place roughly in the period from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> century, including:

- the Pope's practice of celebrating Eucharist at different churches (stations) on the weekdays of Lent; the Roman Missal recommends that an appropriately adapted form of stational tradition be promoted today
- the observance of Ember Days: days of fasting and prayer four times a year associated with the change of seasons, perhaps arising out of agricultural practices
- the emergence of a pre-Lenten preparatory season of three weeks, with the Sundays designated Septuagesima, Sexagesima and Quinquagesima because of their chronological precedence before Quadragesima, a traditional name for Lent

- the designation of the Fourth Sunday of Lent as *Laetare Sunday* based on the first word of the entrance antiphon for that day, plus the eventual and unrelated custom of rose-coloured vestments
- the reconciliation of penitents on Holy Thursday
- the consecration of the sacred chrism by the bishop at the last Mass before the Easter Vigil, ie the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday.

There are competing claims within the current Roman Missal as to the first day of Lent. It appears to be Ash Wednesday but the Prayer over the Offerings on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent makes reference to "the beginning of this venerable and sacred time."

The practice of veiling the cross and statues during Lent originated in the Middle Ages. This tradition has been maintained as a contemporary option, to be observed from the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent through to the Vigil, except for the cross once it is unveiled on Good Friday.

The post-Vatican II RCIA provides ritual actions and prayers for the scrutinies of the elect on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays of Lent. The elect also may be presented with the Lord's Prayer and the Creed.

In Australia Lent has been given an additional social justice focus by the Project Compassion campaign of prayer, formation and fund-raising.

#### **ASH WEDNESDAY**

In spite of the fact that Ash Wednesday has never been a day of obligation, it is a day when many Catholics flock to Mass to be marked with the ashes of repentance and mortality. Along with Good Friday, it is a day of fast and abstinence.



#### *Advance preparation*

- Sufficient ashes to be prepared. Starting from the 12<sup>th</sup> century there has been a tradition to make them from the palms of the previous year's Palm Sunday liturgy
- The choice of liturgical music and ministers to be made in good time
- Enough ministers for the distribution of the ashes to be secured and briefed
- General intercessions to be written.

#### *Proximate preparation*

The following additional items need to be put in place in the sanctuary:

- Holy water and sprinkler
- Bowl of ashes for each minister, and if necessary, cards with the text to be said at the distribution
- Basin, soap and towels for ministers to wash their hands.

#### *Celebration*

- Mass proceeds as usual until after the homily
- The prayer of blessing is said over the ashes; they are then sprinkled in silence

- The ashes are distributed
  - The ministers should offer the ashes to each other first
  - The people process as for Holy Communion
  - While the Roman Missal directs the ashes to be placed on the head, the established custom in Australia is to mark the forehead
  - Either text may accompany the signing
- After the General Intercessions, Mass continues as usual.

#### **SCRUTINIES**

Since the post-Vatican II revival of the catechumenate, the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays of Lent have been provided with prayers for the scrutinies of the elect, reflecting the Year A gospel text for the day:

- John 4: the Samaritan woman at the well
- John 9: the man born blind
- John 11: the raising of Lazarus.

For more detail, refer to the RCIA.

#### *Preparation*

Both the parish community and the elect along with their godparents need to be prepared in advance for this often unfamiliar rite.

#### *Celebration*

- After the homily, the people are asked to pray in silence for the elect, then the elect, either kneeling or standing with bowed heads, accompanied by their godparents, are invited to pray for themselves
- All stand for the Intercessions; the godparents place their right hand on the candidate's shoulder
- The priest prays the two prayers of the scrutiny, laying hands laid on the elect in between
- The elect are dismissed
- The Mass continues as usual.

### **HOLY WEEK**

#### *Advance preparation*

Enough time needs to be allowed for the preparation of Orders of Service for the people for the major ceremonies if that is determined to be desirable. Combining the Orders of Service for the Paschal Triduum in a single booklet would help communicate the fact that the rites of the Triduum constitute one liturgy celebrated over three days.

#### **PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD**

#### *Historical notes*

- The ritual remembrance of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem seems to have originated in 4<sup>th</sup> century Jerusalem as an afternoon observance, separate from Mass

- The reading of the Passion narrative is recorded as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> century, but only since Vatican II has each of the synoptic accounts been read in a three-year cycle
- Prior to Vatican II the Sunday before Palm Sunday was called Passion Sunday; now the Sunday with which Holy Week begins is named Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord.

#### *Advance preparation*

- Ordering and preparation of palm branches and deciding how they will be distributed (unless the faithful are instructed in good time to bring their own)
- Deciding which of the three forms will be used and at which Mass
  - A. Full Procession (this may be done at only one Mass)
  - B. Solemn Entrance
  - C. Simple Entrance
- If there is to be full procession
  - ensuring the services of a deacon (if one is available), cross-bearer, thurifer and candle-bearers
  - ensuring a working microphone is available to amplify the opening rites
  - deciding where the faithful will gather for the opening rites, the route the procession will take, and how the processional chant will be sustained
- Deciding about the proclamation of the Passion: Is it to be read or sung? Will it be proclaimed by one person or three? If three, where will they stand and are there microphones for them? Will it be the longer or the shorter form? Are the people to sit or stand?
  - Whether there are multiple voices or a single voice, the proclamation of the Passion needs to be practised thoroughly beforehand.

#### *Proximate preparation*

- Distribution of palms (unless people have brought their own)
- For A or B
  - If the priest wears a cope for the procession, the chasuble needs to be placed in the sanctuary
  - Check on Missal for presider, Gospel Book for deacon, thurible and incense, cross, candles, holy water and sprinkler, the various microphones for the whole liturgy

#### *Celebration*

- A. Full Procession
  - People gather outside and are joined by the ministers (priest, deacon, thurifer, cross-bearer, acolytes) while gathering chant is sung
  - Address, prayer of blessing and sprinkling of branches, gospel of entry into Jerusalem, brief homily (optional)
  - Invitation to process: thurifer with censer and incense, cross-bearer, candle-bearers, deacon with Book of Gospels, priest and other ministers, people
  - Procession with chants
  - Priest incenses altar, changes from cope to chasuble (if cope used) and prays the Collect
- B. Solemn Entrance

- As above, except at the entrance to the church
- C. Simple Entrance
  - Sung entrance antiphon or hymn
- Rest of Mass continues as usual

## **CHRISM MASS**

### *Historical notes*

- The practice of blessing oils is attested in the early document called the *Apostolic Tradition*
- A few centuries later the Gregorian Sacramentary has the bishop consecrating the oils at the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper
- When Pope Pius V banned evening Mass around 1570 the Holy Thursday liturgy was celebrated in the morning; this practice lasted until the Holy Week reforms of 1955 when the Chrism Mass was separated and allocated to the morning, with the Mass of the Lord's Supper restored to the evening
- Concelebration at this Mass is first attested to by Amalarius of Metz in the 9th century; Pope Paul VI reintroduced it in 1965
- The traditional sequence is for the oil of the sick to be blessed before the end of the Eucharistic Prayer, with the oil of catechumens blessed and the chrism consecrated after Holy Communion; the contemporary rite allows for the three oils to be hallowed in succession after the Liturgy of the Word
- Pope Paul VI introduced a new element into this liturgy: the renewal of priestly promises after the Liturgy of the Word
- The Chrism Mass is officially scheduled on Holy Thursday, but in practice it is celebrated in the cathedral at a time and on a day in Holy Week (or even the week before) when the priests of the diocese are able to concelebrate as a presbyterate with the chief priest of the diocese, the bishop
- In spite of the visual prevalence of priests and deacons at this liturgy, the Chrism Mass is fundamentally an ecclesial event featuring the oils that are central to the sacramental life of the whole church: baptism, confirmation, the anointing of the sick and ordination.

### *Celebration*

As this is a cathedral liturgy presided over by the bishop, it falls beyond the scope of these pastoral notes.

## **WEEKDAYS OF HOLY WEEK**

The season of Lent comes to a close with the beginning of the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday. There are readings and prayers for Mass on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week, but none for a daytime Mass on Thursday.

The weekdays of Holy Week are well suited for the final preparation of the elect for Christian initiation and for the celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation by the already baptised.

## **PASCHAL TRIDUUM**

Note: Helpful checklists may be found in Jeremy Helmes' book *Three Great Days: Preparing the Liturgies of the Paschal Triduum* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2016) pp 80-85.



## HOLY THURSDAY: EVENING MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

### *Historical notes*

- Originally this Thursday was simply a day of fasting, but by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century the Eucharist was being celebrated to conclude the Lenten fast
- In 4<sup>th</sup> century Rome penitents were reconciled on this day (not at Mass)
- Around the 7<sup>th</sup> century there was a morning Mass to end the Lenten fast, a papal Mass (without readings) to hallow the oils, and an evening Mass for the Lord's Supper
- Bells were rung at the *Gloria* from the time of the Middle Ages
- Washing of the feet
  - There was washing of the feet in the baptismal rites of Milan and Gaul by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century but this dropped away; it was also practised in 5<sup>th</sup> century Jerusalem on Holy Thursday and this custom spread to Spain and the west, including in the 7<sup>th</sup> century papal liturgy
  - In the Middle Ages, monks washed the feet of the poor; they also washed the feet of clergy and fellow monks
  - In the Roman Missal of 1570, the washing of feet took place after Mass; in the reforms of 1955 it was reinserted into the Mass after the homily
- The post-Vatican II reforms included:
  - Retaining the entrance antiphon based on Galatians 6:14, "We should glory in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," which serves as an overture for the whole Triduum
  - Adopting a new first reading (the establishment of the Passover rite in Exodus) and psalm while retaining the traditional reading about the Lord's Supper from 1 Corinthians
  - Encouraging a special collection for poor in harmony with early weekly eucharistic practice
  - Allowing concelebration and Communion under both kinds
  - Simplifying the transfer of the Blessed Sacrament for Holy Communion on Good Friday; this originally involved taking only a host for the priest to the sacristy but from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> century it became a solemn procession focussed on adoration.

### *Advance preparation*

- Determine what time in the evening the Mass will be celebrated
- Consider how the newly hallowed sacramental oils may be acknowledged
- Determine how the ritual of the washing of the feet is to be carried out: what roles need to be filled, how many people are to have their feet washed, who they will be, where they will be placed, what rehearsal will be needed, what resources (jug, basin, towels) need to be prepared
- Identify the place of reposition and the route to be taken; decide what access the faithful will have for personal prayer after the liturgy and when this will be brought to a close
- Decide whether there is to be, as recommended, a special collection for the poor and for what cause, ensure parishioners are informed in advance, and consider making the collection a procession in which everyone comes forward to make their donation rather than give to collectors in the usual manner
- Ensure that enough extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are rostered for Communion under both kinds

- Ensure that all the liturgical music is well chosen and ministers prepared
- Arrange a rehearsal of all ministers, including the lectors.

*Parish bulletin insert*

**HOLY THURSDAY**

As evening falls on Holy Thursday we cross a significant threshold. Dusk ushers in the great three days of Christian observance, the Paschal Triduum. Lent has come to a quiet end after a flurry of liturgical activity: Palm Sunday celebrations, the Chrism Mass, reconciliation services and the final preparations of catechumens and candidates for initiation. The season of renewal and purification has run its course; now it is time to gather for the Christian Passover.

Like Jesus' garment, the liturgies of the Triduum form a seamless whole. The Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, the Celebration of the Lord's Passion, the Easter Vigil and the Evening Prayer of Easter Day all celebrate one and the same great mystery of faith: the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is made plain at the very outset. The opening chant for this evening's Eucharist declares it for all to hear: *We should glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, for he is our salvation, life and resurrection; through him we are saved and made free.* Could it be clearer?

And if this proclamation were not sufficient, we are gently reminded again and again as the days progress. Each succeeding liturgy begins and ends in silence. We are welcomed with a greeting when we gather on this Thursday evening and are not dismissed until the Easter Eucharist comes to a close. It is as if we are invited to experience the three principal liturgies as movements in one symphony. History and mystery interweave in an observance whose profound meaning takes three days to unfold.

Each celebration views the mystery through a particular prism – the supper, the cross, the resurrection – but it is one mystery from start to finish. This evening's liturgy takes the form of a Eucharist, familiar in shape but distinguished in order and feel. Tonight we pray with a heightened consciousness of the fierce dedication that gave rise to Eucharist. We are more intensely aware of the passion with which Jesus loved his Father and his friends until death. We know that to sup at the table with Jesus is to commit ourselves to love and live in this way.

The prayers and readings focus on the memorial meal. The rite is embellished with the washing of the feet to manifest the gospel in symbolic action as well as in word proclaimed. A special collection for the poor is taken up, to allow us to make our participation in the mystery concrete. Communion in both the Body and the Blood of the Lord is offered. And the liturgy of this night ends with the transfer of the sacrament to the altar of repose, not in triumph but in reverent practicality, to allow Communion to be given at the solemn liturgy the following day. There is no formal end, no dismissal; we may remain in quiet adoration of the Lord before departing into the night in silence, all the while pondering the mystery until we meet again.

*Proximate preparation*

- Remove the Blessed Sacrament from the tabernacle and reserve in a proper place
- Prepare the altar of repose
- Prepare the worship space with fresh altar linen, candles and a modest array of flowers
- Put in place all the requisites for the washing of feet: jug and bowl of water, towels, seats; soap and water at the credence table

- Prepare all the vessels and materials for the Mass, including wine for Communion under both kinds, and enough hosts for the Mass and for the Good Friday service
- Put out a bell or bells to be rung during the *Gloria* if that has been agreed upon
- Seating for concelebrants
- Missal and lectionary all marked and in place

#### *Celebration*

- The form of the liturgy is a celebration of the Eucharist with four additional features:
  - the washing of feet
  - collection for the poor
  - transfer of the Eucharist
  - silent conclusion with no dismissal
- The entrance antiphon is an overture for the whole Triduum: “We should glory in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom is our salvation, life and resurrection, through whom we are saved and delivered.” Hymns and chants based on this text are especially appropriate this evening
- Bells may be rung during the *Gloria*
- Washing of the feet to be conducted as planned in advance
- No Creed
- Collection for the poor to be conducted as planned in advance
- Communion under both kinds
- Ciborium with hosts for Good Friday placed on altar
- The transfer of the sacrament is conducted with simple ceremony; the priest with the sacrament is led by a cross-bearer, candle-bearers and a thurifer in a procession which is not celebratory; there are no greetings or prayers
  - the sacrament is incensed
  - the presider is vested with humeral veil
  - the sacrament is carried in procession led by cross, candles, and thurible while a chant is sung
  - the sacrament is incensed again and placed in the tabernacle of repose
  - after silent prayer of adoration the ministers genuflect and leave in silence
- The altar may be stripped after the service has concluded
- The paschal fast has begun; it is not broken until the end of the paschal vigil.

### **GOOD FRIDAY: CELEBRATION OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD**

#### *Historical notes*

- In the first few centuries there was no liturgy, only a strict fast in a spirit of lament
- By the 4<sup>th</sup> century there were services in Jerusalem; these spread to the west and to Rome
- The service took the form of readings, prayers, veneration of the cross and Communion
- There were always three readings; the first was Hosea 6 (now Isaiah 52-53) then the customary passages from Hebrews and John
- The prayers were solemn in form with intention, silence, collect; this common ancient practice dropped out except for Good Friday in Rome

- Adoration of the Cross originated in Jerusalem and was adopted in Rome by the 8th century, but the showing of the cross took place at different times in different places; the ritual of unveiling derives from 9th century France
- The reproaches are of French or Byzantine origin, the Trisagion from the ancient east; care needs to be taken if the Reproaches are used lest they be interpreted anti-semitically
- By the Middle Ages the priest alone communicated
- In the 15<sup>th</sup> century the liturgy came to be celebrated in the morning instead of the afternoon
- The revisions of 1955 restored the afternoon time and Communion for the faithful

*Parish bulletin insert*

**GOOD FRIDAY**

No other liturgy begins with the same combination of solemnity, simplicity and silence as does the Celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday. The rite is stark. From the silence of the opening procession to the silence of departure the liturgy of Good Friday is elemental. It focuses successively on Word, Cross and Communion. The short opening prayer, proclaimed without greeting or introduction, declares that it is the Paschal mystery we celebrate today – the whole mystery of the dying and rising of Jesus Christ, not just his death on the cross.

The Word is long and strong. The poignancy of Isaiah's prophetic account of the suffering servant is echoed in the psalm that follows. We pray a prayer of heartfelt trust in the midst of abandonment: "Father, I put my life in your hands." The theme continues in the reading from the letter to the Hebrews; we hear of the Son who in suffering became "the source of eternal salvation." All this paves the way for the proclamation of the Passion.

In accordance with ancient tradition we read the story of Jesus' suffering and death as told by the gospel writer John. His is a unique version of the drama, recast in the light of the resurrection. In the Passion according to John, Jesus is already Lord; he is in command throughout. Certainly Jesus is betrayed, suffers and dies, but as sovereign of love and truth. The Cross in John is an emphatic sign of victory rather than an instrument of shame.

But one facet of John's telling of the story needs to be heard with care. When he uses the term "the Jews" to describe the opponents of Jesus he does not mean the Jewish people in general but rather the religious authorities of the day. In their determination to silence this troublesome prophet we recognise how ruthless we all can be in defending ourselves against the threat of truth. The liturgy of the word concludes with a lengthy set of intercessions in the solemn form of the early Church; this is truly the prayer of the faithful, interceding for the whole of humankind in every kind of need.

We move from word to cross. The cross is shown and acclaimed by the whole assembly. For baptised believers it is the sign of God's love disarming the power of sin and death in our world once and for all. We venerate the cross as a symbol of our salvation. The veneration we offer it is a profession of faith in the presence and power of God to bring life out of death.

Communion completes the celebration. In receiving the Bread of Life we participate concretely in the paschal mystery. Throughout these three days to share in the Body of the Lord is to commit ourselves to the dying and rising that discipleship demands. The service has no formal dismissal. We simply disperse until we gather again the following night to keep vigil with the Lord.

Prayer of the Church

The offices of Morning Prayer and Readings may be prayed on Good Friday morning by members of the parish community. [Link to an Order of service?]

### Afternoon liturgy

#### *Advance preparation*

- Determine how the Passion is to be proclaimed and by whom, noting that the practice of having the people take the part of the crowd is discouraged; arrange one or more rehearsals; decide whether the people will be asked to stand or sit
- Alert collectors to the collection for the Holy Places
- Identify and prepare the Cross
- Determine how the Showing and the Adoration of the Cross is to be conducted
- Plan for a seamless transfer of the Blessed Sacrament from the place of repose
- Identify how many ministers of Communion will be needed and secure them
- Rehearsal of all ministers, including the lectors

#### *Proximate preparation*

- Ensure that the altar and sanctuary are bare
- Altar cloth, corporal and unlit candles ready on credence table
- If multiple microphones are to be used, ensure they are in place and working
- Missal and lectionary marked and in place
- Cross for veneration prepared and in place

#### *Celebration*

- Priest presider in Mass vestments, assisted by deacon if there is one
- Silent procession, sufficiently lengthy prostration
- Collect with no greeting or introduction
- Liturgy of Word
  - Isaiah, Psalm, Hebrews, John
  - Brief homily
  - Solemn prayers
    - There is no provision for omitting or altering any of the prayers
    - The people may be invited to kneel after the intention is announced and then to stand for the prayer
  - Collection for the Holy Places
- Showing and Veneration of Cross
  - First form of the Showing: the veiled cross is carried through the church to the sanctuary where the priest presider unveils it in three steps, each with sung acclamation and silent adoration; chant settings may be found in both the Roman Missal and Catholic Worship Book II
  - Second form: the unveiled cross is carried through the church with three stops for the sung acclamation and silent adoration
  - The one cross is venerated by a genuflection, kiss or other suitable reverence, first by the priest celebrant, then other ministers and the faithful
  - There is no provision for more than one cross; if the assembly is too large for individual veneration, the people are invited to adore the cross in silence from their

place (with the opportunity to offer personal veneration once the liturgy has concluded)

- Holy Communion
  - The altar is prepared with cloth, corporal and Missal for the transfer of the sacrament
  - As far as possible, the transfer takes place without delay at the conclusion of the veneration of the cross, and without ceremony
  - At the conclusion of the distribution of Holy Communion the remaining hosts are placed in a ciborium and removed to a suitable place outside the worship space
  - The liturgy concludes in silence, with no dismissal
  - The cross may remain in place for personal veneration

#### **HOLY SATURDAY**

- Day of fasting; preparatory rites for the elect

#### Prayer of the Church

The offices of Morning Prayer and Readings may be prayed on Holy Saturday morning by members of the parish community. [Link to an Order of service?]

#### **PASCHAL VIGIL**

##### *Historical notes*

- From early times the vigil service was one of prayer and word, culminating in the Eucharist, perhaps based on the assumption that Christ's return would take place at night
- Baptism at the paschal vigil was only a local custom in Rome and Africa at first; it only became a near universal ideal after the Council of Nicaea
- The baptism rite grew more elaborate and the light ceremony added; by early in the 13th century the order of Light-Word-Baptism-Eucharist was established
- The liturgy came to be anticipated more and more until it was celebrated on Holy Saturday morning; the reform of 1951 returned it to the evening

#### Liturgy of Light

- The origins of the paschal fire are obscure; it may have been a pagan Irish practice that made its way to France and Germany; it was adopted in Rome by the 12<sup>th</sup> century
- The use of a Paschal Candle may have evolved from the lighting of the evening candle; there are references to it in 4<sup>th</sup> century writings, while the incision of a cross and the Greek letters alpha and omega is recorded in 7th century Spain and England
- The procession of the candle took place in 5th century Jerusalem, then in Spain and Gaul and finally Rome; the three-fold acclamation of the Light of Christ derives from Frankish monastic custom
- There are various examples of the *Exultet* from early centuries; the present text comes from early 8th century Gaul but may have originated with Ambrose

#### The Liturgy of the Word

- The number of readings has varied from four to more than ten; today there are seven Old Testament readings, each with a psalm and a prayer

- Once the Old Testament readings led to the baptismal rites then the introductory rites for Mass and the New Testament readings; now they are separated from the New Testament readings by the *Gloria* and collect
- The *Gloria* originated in the East as a dawn resurrection hymn; the ringing of bells during the Easter *Gloria* began in 10<sup>th</sup> century England and crossed into Europe by the late 13th century

#### The Liturgy of Baptism

- The practice of paschal baptism was influenced by the death-resurrection motif of Romans 6:3 in contrast to the rebirth motif of John 3:5
- In the 4th century heyday of baptismal catechesis, adults were initiated with the water bath, anointing and the Eucharist at the paschal vigil, but from the 6th century infants were baptised after birth, and the anointing with chrism (“confirmation”) delayed until the bishop was available; the links between baptism, confirmation, eucharist and the vigil lost until restored by the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in 1972
- The attestation of candidates occurred from at least the 3rd century; this was shifted to parents and godparents when infant baptism became the norm
- The litany of saints was prayed in 4th century Antioch, then in Constantinople and finally Rome by the 7<sup>th</sup> century; it served as processional music for movements to and from the baptismal font
- The blessing of water was done from beginning of 3rd century and a couple of centuries later in Rome; similar in form to the Eucharistic prayer, it was accompanied by actions of breathing, touching, infusing and plunging. The current texts are entirely new but biblically based and the actions have been reduced to one
- The renunciation of evil and profession of faith, preceded by an exorcistic anointing, are of ancient origin in both East and West; in Jerusalem, Africa, Milan and Rome each of the three parts of the profession of faith was accompanied by being plunged in the water; the early practice was one of partial immersion and pouring
- The post-baptismal anointing that signified the candidate becoming priest, prophet and king was done with the oil of thanksgiving
- For Ambrose the white garment demonstrated the change from the old self to the new; it was worn for a week, then taken off on the octave
- Reference to the paschal candle in the baptismal rite was made in the East by the 5th century, then in Rome via Gaul by the 12<sup>th</sup> century
- The renewal of baptismal promises has been a long tradition

#### The Liturgy of Eucharist

- The completion of initiation by the Eucharist was established practice in the early church of Rome; in some places the newly initiated were given milk, honey and water as well.

*Parish bulletin insert*

#### **EASTER VIGIL**

The night of nights has arrived. We gather in darkness and silence for the flame of the great Easter candle to be lit from the fire. Then we become again a pilgrim people like the Israelites of old. They followed the pillar of cloud by day and the fire by night, we the flickering flame that radiates the light of Christ. In our name the candle is acclaimed, revered and praised extravagantly in song. This is ever the night on which we are set free and blessed with peace and joy.

By the light of Christ and at great length we proclaim the story of salvation, beginning with readings from the Old Testament. From the majestic roll-call of creation and the testing of Abraham we turn to the essential narrative of the night, the liberation of Israel from Egypt through the waters of the sea. The prophets Isaiah, Baruch and Ezekiel expound on the covenant fidelity of Israel's God and foreshadow a new and everlasting covenant sealed with the gift of God's own spirit. The vigil of the word culminates in readings from the New Testament on Jesus' resurrection and our risen life in him.

From light and word we move to water and oil. There may be catechumens, by now the elect, to be fully initiated and baptised Catholics to be confirmed (baptised Christians from other churches seeking full communion with the Catholic Church being best welcomed at another time). Our fellowship with all the saints who have gone before us is reaffirmed in the litany. The waters of the font are blessed in a rich memorial prayer, then those to be baptised affirm their faith and allow themselves to be born anew as the waters of life are poured over them. They, and all to be confirmed, are anointed with the holy oil of God's Spirit, ready to be invited later to Communion at the Lord's table. In solidarity with the newly initiated the whole assembly renews its baptismal promises and offers the prayers of intercession.

At last our three-day journey comes to its climax. The focus shifts to the Eucharistic table where we break bread with the risen Lord. Joyful thanks and praise are offered over the bread and wine that they might be for us the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Transformed by word and Spirit, the gifts are offered back to us in Communion. Receiving them in faith we ourselves become more truly the Body of the Lord, bearing his life for the world. To that world we are finally returned, sent forth with Easter alleluias ringing in our ears. All that remains to complete these great three days of observance is to gather for the Prayer of the Church as evening falls on Easter Day.

So ends the Paschal Triduum; thus begins the Paschal season. For fifty days the church immerses itself in the life of the Risen One, to be renewed in heart and mission, until the celebration of Pentecost brings the season to an exuberant close.

#### *Advance preparation*

- Ordering a new and beautifully decorated paschal candle from a reputable artist or religious community in good time, ensuring it is marked properly and is ready for the grains of incense to be inserted (if not done in advance), and checking that it fits securely in the paschal candle-stand
- Ordering tapers or candles for all participants
- Liaison with the RCIA team concerning candidates for initiation; identifying who they and their sponsors are, whether there are children as well as adults, clarifying whether there are any baptised Christians seeking full communion with the Catholic Church, noting that the Roman Missal does not envisage their reception taking place at the Vigil and does not include any ritual for it
- Determining at what hour the vigil service will commence after darkness has fallen
- Identifying all the lights that need to be switched off, apart from any minimal lighting that is necessary for public safety, and when and which lights are to be switched back on; identifying the person responsible for controlling the lighting system as the liturgy progresses
- Preparing the paschal fire – determining what form it is to take, where it is to be located, identifying the responsible person for gathering the resources, setting it up and managing it



- Determining how the ritual at the fire is to be celebrated (including how the paschal candle is to be lit and how burning charcoal is to be placed in the thurible) and ensuring that all the materials are at hand
- Identifying the minister of praise for the paschal candle and what form the *Exultet* is to take
- Deciding how and when the candles and tapers of the people are to be lit
- Choosing which, if any, of the readings is to be omitted; identifying readers and ensuring they practise to a quality that is commensurate with the unique importance of this night
- Ensuring the baptismal font is cleaned and filled with fresh water
- Having suitably festive flower arrangements prepared

#### *Proximate preparation*

- The tabernacle is empty
- The Missal, lectionary, and all supplementary text resources are prepared and in place
- A lighting source, eg torch, is at hand for the prayers of the fire ritual
- Sufficient towels are placed close to the font
- The newly blessed/consecrated oils are placed where they are to be used
- Ushers are ready to direct people to the paschal fire and not into the church
- A new supply of altar breads and wine is provided for the paschal Eucharist
- The thurible and incense are at hand.

#### *Celebration*

- Service of light
  - At the fire: sign of the cross, address, prayer of blessing, signing of the paschal candle, insertion of incense, lighting of the candle, burning coals for thurible, incense
  - Procession with the paschal candle: the priest's candle or taper is lit at the first stop, all the people's at the second)
  - The Easter Proclamation
- Vigil of Word
  - Old Testament readings, each followed by responsorial psalm and prayer (the Exodus reading being mandatory)
  - *Gloria* (with optional bells), Collect
  - New Testament readings (including the Easter Alleluia)
  - Homily
- Celebration of Initiation
  - If there are baptisms (but preferably no candidates for Reception into Full Communion with the Catholic Church)
    - The Litany of the Saints is sung while ministers and candidates process with paschal candle to font
    - Address by presiding priest
    - Blessing of baptismal water (with optional lowering of paschal candle)
    - Renunciation of sin and Profession of faith (candidates alone)
    - Individual baptisms
    - Clothing with baptismal garment
    - Presentation of lighted candle
  - Confirmation
    - Address and invitation to prayer

- Laying on of hands
  - Anointing with chrism
- Communal renewal of baptismal promises (replacing the Creed)
- General Intercessions (prayed by the newly initiated)
  
- If there are no candidates for initiation
  - Litany of the Saints
  - Blessing of baptismal water
  - Renewal of baptismal promises
  - Sprinkling with baptismal water
  - General Intercessions
  
- Celebration of Eucharist
  - Gifts brought by the newly initiated
  - Communion under both kinds
  - Solemn blessing
  - Dismissal with Alleluias.

## **EASTER SUNDAY**

### *Historical notes*

- There was no Mass on Easter Sunday until perhaps at the end of the 4th century in Jerusalem, then later Africa, and in Rome at the turn of the 6th century
- The sequence was added, and a final blessing for foods and lamb, and processions
- In 7th and 8th century Rome, there was a special focus on Vespers

### *Celebration*

- Easter Sunday Masses are celebrated with festive joy
- The paschal candle is lit
- The Creed may be replaced by the rite of renewal of baptismal promises (including the sprinkling)
- The solemn blessing from the Vigil service may be used
- The dismissal is augmented by the double Alleluia

The Paschal Triduum concludes with the celebration of the Evening Prayer of the Church.

## **EASTER**

### **EASTER SEASON**

#### *Historical notes*

- The Easter season is older than Lent; it began as eight days but soon grew to fifty by about the year 200
- The season as a whole, including Pentecost Sunday, celebrated the one mystery of Jesus' resurrection, ascension and sending of the Spirit

- It was a privileged time for the newly baptised to absorb the meaning of the mysteries they had been led through; this practice was called “mystagogy”
- The Sunday after Easter Sunday came to be called *Dominica in albis* because on this day the newly baptised set aside their white baptismal robes
- In time Luke’s dating of the ascension forty days after the resurrection led to the break-up of the Easter season by the introduction of Ascension Thursday
- Pentecost Sunday became a feast of the Holy Spirit and developed its own octave
- The post-Vatican II restoration of the Easter season remains a partial compromise in that the season is still divided by the feast of the Ascension, whether held on the Thursday or the following Sunday; the weekdays between it and Pentecost are oriented to the awaited outpouring of the Spirit
- Reflecting the origins of the season, the first eight days are still referred to as the Octave of Easter
- In more recent times the designation of the Second Sunday of Easter as Divine Mercy Sunday has laid the Paschal Triduum open to a degree of competition, as the preparatory Novena begins on Good Friday.

#### *Celebration*

- The Masses of the Easter season are celebrated with festive joy
- The paschal candle remains in a prominent position and is lit
- All the readings are taken from the New Testament
- Homilists need to take care when preaching on the combination of readings from the Acts of the Apostles and the gospel of John, lest the accounts of Jesus’ and the early Christian community’s conflict with the Jewish tradition are interpreted anti-semitically
- The whole season is one of mystagogy – a deep reflection on the mysteries of faith – not just for the primary candidates, the newly initiated, but for the whole community.

#### Pentecost Sunday

- Pentecost Sunday brings the season of Easter to a glorious close
- Echoing the Easter Vigil, Pentecost Sunday has special readings (including four Old Testament options) and prayers for the Vigil Mass which could be celebrated as a more prolonged occasion of prayer in union with Mary and the apostles (Acts 1:14)
- The Easter season comes to a close with the celebration of the Evening Prayer of the Church
- The paschal candle is extinguished but kept in full view and ready for use in baptismal and funeral rites.

