CELEBRATING THE PASchal MYSTERY 2012

Holy Week offers us the opportunity to be immersed in the central events of Redemption, to relive the Paschal Mystery, the great mystery of the Christian faith.

Good Liturgy is not a reenactment of something that happened over 2000 years ago but an actual participation in the events themselves. They are timeless and made present in our Liturgical celebrations. Holy Week invites us to participate in the timeless Paschal Mystery, the saving life, suffering, passion, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION

Introductory Rites On this day the Church “recalls the entrance of Christ the Lord into Jerusalem to accomplish his Paschal Mystery.” (RM p 297) The memorial of this event is to be included in every Mass. The Missal provides three forms for this memorial of the Lord’s entrance. Although the Procession should take place only once (before the principal Mass), the Solemn Entrance may be used before the principal Mass if the Procession cannot be held. The prayers for the blessing of the palms are used whenever the Procession or the Solemn Entrance is celebrated; the penitential rite of the Mass is then omitted. The blessing of palms without the Procession or Solemn Entrance is not permitted.

The Passion Ministers of the Word and pastoral musicians are encouraged to study the rubrics for the proclamation of the Passion. There is a Gospel Acclamation as usual, and the deacon receives the blessing as usual (lay readers do not receive a blessing). Omitted are candles and incense, the greeting and response (“The Lord be with you...”), the making of the signs of the cross, and the people’s response ("Glory to you, O Lord"). Since it is a reading from the Gospel, the appropriate posture for the assembly (where possible) during the reading of the Passion is standing. The deacon and/or priest may be assisted by lectors in the reading of the Passion on Palm Sunday and Good Friday. There is often great difficulty in reading the Passion with various roles given to several readers, since the Passion accounts were never written to be scripts for a Passion play. This practice has been encouraged by missalette publishers, not by the liturgical books. The Parish might wish to consider setting aside missalettes, give up their "crowd" lines, and listen to the Passion as proclaimed, not read.

Where it is not possible to celebrate Mass, there should be a Liturgy of the Word about the Lord’s messianic entry and his Passion, either on the Saturday evening or at a suitable time on the Sunday.

THE LITURGY OF THE EASTER TRIDUUM

The Sacred Triduum marks the three holiest days of the Church’s year. Every year, the Church celebrates the great mysteries of the redemption of mankind in the “most sacred triduum of the crucifixion, burial and resurrection”. The Sacred Triduum starts with the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord’s Supper and continues through Good Friday’s Solemn Liturgy of the Lord’s Passion and Death and Holy Saturday’s Great Vigil of Easter which continues until Vespers of the Resurrection.

As far as possible, all preparation should be done beforehand so that for all presiders, liturgical ministers, musicians, and sacristans these may be days of peace, prayer, and vigil. Those responsible for liturgy should see to it that the liturgies of these days are characterised by care and dignity, by simplicity and by that deep joy which is announced in the Entrance Antiphon of Holy Thursday: “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.” (RM p 330) By the celebration of the Easter Triduum, that is, of the Death, Burial and Resurrection of Christ, the Church means to present and to fulfil the mystery of the Passover, the passing over of the Lord from this world to the Father. It is appropriate that small religious communities come together in larger churches, so as to foster active participation in the liturgy. Likewise the faithful from a number of smaller parishes in the care of a single priest should, if possible, gather in the main church of the area to
participate in the sacred rites. Where, however, two or more parishes are entrusted to the care of a single priest, each parish having a considerable congregation and the possibility of performing the celebrations with dignity and solemnity, the parish priest has the faculty to repeat the celebration of the Easter Triduum, with due regard for the norms. Lent continues until Maundy Thursday. With the evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper begins the Easter Triduum, which includes Good Friday, the Lord’s Passion and Holy Saturday, centres upon the Easter Vigil and concludes with Easter Vespers on Easter Sunday.

The weekdays of this week are dedicated to the celebration of penance, abstaining from the celebration of the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, since these have their natural place in the Easter Vigil.

Funerals during Triduum: A funeral Mass may not be celebrated on Holy Thursday (even before the celebration of the Mass of the Lord’s Supper), Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday.

Marriages during Triduum: The Rite of Marriage may not be celebrated on Good Friday or Holy Saturday.

HOLY (MAUNDY) THURSDAY
With the Mass of the Lord’s Supper, the Church inaugurates the sacred Easter Triduum, aims at recalling that last supper, when the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, loving those who were his own in the world until the very end, offered his Body and blood under the species of bread and wine to God and under these symbols, gave them to his Apostles that they might consume them, and commanded them and their successors in the priesthood to offer them.

By means especially of the homily, attention should be focussed upon the mysteries which are commemorated in this Mass, namely the institution of the Holy Eucharist and that of the priestly Order, together with the Lord’s command to love one another.

Preparation The tabernacle should be empty before the liturgy begins and holy water stoops emptied. Enough bread should be consecrated at this Mass for Holy Communion today and tomorrow. Though Holy Communion may be brought to the sick today, Holy Communion may be distributed at the church itself only within the Mass. It is fitting that for the reservation of the Eucharist to serve communion on Good Friday, a chapel should be arranged in which prayer and meditation may be fostered. The Blessed Sacrament should be reserved in a closed tabernacle, exposition in a monstrance being absolutely excluded. Nor should the tabernacle in any way have the appearance of a tomb or a sepulchre, since the chapel of reservation is not intended to represent the Lord’s tomb, but simply to reserve the Holy Eucharist for communion the next day.

The Mass Only the Mass of Chrism and the Mass of the Lord’s Supper may be celebrated today. Mass without a congregation is not permitted today. Funeral Masses may not be celebrated. The custom of receiving the newly blessed oils can be incorporated into the Mass of the Lord’s Supper, with ministers carrying the vessels of blessed oil in procession. This can be an effective means of catechising the faithful about the use and effects of the Holy Oils and Chrism in Christian life (see Diocesan Liturgy Department circular). The old oils should be burned or poured into the Blessed Sacrament lamp (where appropriate). During the singing of the ‘Gloria’, the Church bells and other bells are rung and then remain silent until the Gloria at the Easter Vigil.

The Washing of Feet is encouraged in all parishes following the liturgy of the Word. This rite should be characterised by its simplicity, allowing the beautiful gesture of service to speak to all of ministry in the church. There is no provision in the Roman Rite to substitute the washing of feet for hands.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with the Procession of the Gifts. The Missal instructs that the collection of gifts and money today be for the poor. It is appropriate to include gifts collected during Lent as the fruits of penance. During this procession the Ubi Caritas (Where charity and love is...) is sung. The proper parts for Eucharistic Prayer 1 should be used. Holy Communion under both kinds takes on even greater meaning on this day, and thus some additional care in planning will add greater richness to the meaning of this celebration. The sick may receive communion at any time during the day.

Following the Prayer after Communion, the Holy Eucharist is transferred to the place of reposition. After the transfer of the Holy Eucharist (or at some other suitable time) the altar is stripped privately, and any crosses are removed or covered with a red or purple veil. Holy water is removed from all fonts, to be refilled with water blessed at the Easter
Vigil. 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.

The procession and the reposition of the Blessed Sacrament should not take place in churches where it is not intended to celebrate the solemn Liturgy of the Lord’s Passion on Good Friday.

GOOD FRIDAY

On this day, when Christ our paschal Lamb was sacrificed, the church contemplates and adores the Cross of her Lord and Spouse, commemorating her own coming forth from the side of Christ as he slept on the cross, and interceding for the salvation of the world. According to a most ancient tradition the Church does not celebrate the Eucharist today.

Liturgy of the Hours. It is recommended that there be a solemn liturgical celebration of the Office of Readings and Morning Prayer on both Good Friday and Holy Saturday so that the Christian community may meditate more efficaciously and more fully on the Passion, in expectation of the Resurrection. Evening Prayer is not recited by those who take part in the celebration of the Lord’s Passion. Night Prayer is celebrated as after Second Evening Prayer of Sunday.

Celebration of the Lord’s Passion The celebration of the Lord’s Passion should take place about 3pm, but for pastoral reasons may be at a later hour, but not before noon and not after 9pm. The altar should be bare and devoid of cloths, cross and candlesticks. The priest and deacon wear red chasuble and dalmatic. The clergy enter in silence and prostrate or kneel before the altar, signifying abasement and also the grief and sorrow of the Church. The priest then prays the opening prayer from the Chair.

See the guidelines for the reading of the Passion in the section on Passion Sunday, above. The General Intercessions are prayed following the wording and form handed down by ancient tradition. “After the reading of the Lord’s Passion, the Priest gives a brief homily and, at its end, the faithful may be invited to spend a short time in prayer.” (RM p 347).

Veneration of the Cross The ritual speaks of the veneration of the cross, not necessarily a crucifix. Wood is the operative sign for the veneration, not a figure or other embellishments that might be attached to the cross. The image of the dead and defeated Lord can narrow our focus to one isolated moment in the paschal mystery, whereas the cross (more precisely the wood of the cross) can better suggest the tree of life, whose power is present now, and transcends any particular moment in human history.

The Ceremonial of Bishops directs that only one cross should be used in the veneration. It should be sizeable and of a certain beauty. The formula for the showing of the cross and the people’s response should be sung. The personal adoration of the cross is an important feature in this celebration and every effort should be made to achieve it. If the numbers are so great that all cannot come forward, the priest, after some of the clergy and faithful have adored the cross, can take the cross and stand in the centre before the altar. In a few words he invites the people to adore the Cross. He then elevates the cross higher for a brief period of time, while the faithful adore it in silence. Pastorally, it should be kept in mind that when a sufficiently large cross is used even a large community can reverence it in due time. The foot of the cross as well as the right and left arm can be approached and venerated. Co-ordination with ushers and planning the flow of people beforehand can allow for this part of the liturgy to be celebrated with decorum and devotion.

After the veneration, the cross is positioned near the altar and four candles are placed near it. The cross will remain there and the candles may remain lit for a period of time following the liturgy to allow the faithful to spend some additional time in prayer before the cross.

Holy Communion Communion is distributed only within the liturgy of the Lord’s Passion, but may be taken to the sick at any time this day.

After Communion The Celebrant says the Prayer over the People from the Missal. Then, all depart in silence.
HOLY SATURDAY

On Holy Saturday the Church waits at the Lord’s tomb, meditating upon his passion, death and descent into Hell, awaiting in prayer and fasting his Resurrection.

According to the Church’s ancient tradition, the sacraments are not celebrated today. The altar is bare and the Mass is never celebrated. Holy Communion may be given on this day only as Viaticum. The celebration of marriage is forbidden.

Rites for the preparation of the elect for initiation may be celebrated this day, as described in the RCIA, within the context of the gathered community.

If it is not possible to celebrate the Office of Readings and Morning Prayer with the people's participation there should be a celebration of the Word of God or some other devotional exercise appropriate to today’s mystery, especially one that honours the Blessed Virgin Mary for her sharing in the Passion of her Son.

An image of Christ crucified or laid in the tomb may be set up in the church for veneration, or else a portrayal of his descent into Hell, such as to cast light upon the mystery commemorated by Holy Saturday, or else an image of Our Lady of Sorrows.

THE EASTER VIGIL

“Of this night’s Vigil, which is the greatest and most noble of all solemnities, there is to be only one celebration in each church.” (RM p 377). On this holy night, the Church keeps watch, celebrating the resurrection of Christ in the sacraments and awaiting his return in glory. It is the turning point of the Triduum, the Passover of the new covenant, which marks Christ’s passage from death to life. This is the night the Church awaits in vigil the Resurrection of the Lord, celebrating it with the sacraments of Christian initiation. The Christian tradition has however always recognised its character of expectation of the Lord’s eschatological coming. Therefore, the Easter Vigil does not correspond to the usual Saturday evening Mass and its character is unique in the cycle of the liturgical year.

Time of celebration

The entire celebration of the Easter Vigil must take place during the night, so that it begins after nightfall and ends before daybreak on Sunday.” (RM p 377). The celebration of a Mass without the rites of the Easter vigil is not allowed. 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.

The Service of Light (Lucernarium)

In a suitable place outside the Church, a “blazing fire” (rogus ardens) is to be prepared so that the people may gather around it and experience the flames dispelling the darkness and lighting up the night. Thus do the beauty of the fire, its warmth and its light, draw the liturgical assembly together in unity. The rubrics, however, acknowledge that when this cannot be done adaptations may be made. This candle should be made of wax, never be artificial, be renewed each year, be only one in number, and be of sufficiently large size that it may convey the truth that Christ is the light of the world.

The organisation of the procession is more clearly described in the new Third Edition of the Roman Missal. One of the ministers takes burning coals from the fire and places them in a thurible) and the priest, in the usual way, places incense into it. The deacon, or in his absence another appropriate minister accepts the Easter candle from the celebrant and a procession is formed. The order of procession is the thurifer with smoking thurible, preceding the minister holding the candle, followed by the ministers and the priest and the people. All hold unlit candles. Just as the children of Israel were guided at night by the pillar of fire, so Christians follow the risen Christ.
The places at which the proclamation 'The Light of Christ' are sung, now differ from what was in the previous Missal. The new places are: at the door of the Church (after which the priest lights his candle), in the middle of the Church (after which all light their candles), and before the altar, facing the people. The Missal instructs the deacon to place the candle in a large candle stand prepared either next to the ambo or in the middle of the sanctuary.

The Exsultet
Before the Easter Proclamation, the priest gives his candle to one of the ministers and blesses incense as at the Gospel during Mass. Having asked for and received the blessing, the deacon announces the Easter proclamation from the ambo or at a lectern. This poetic text captures the whole Easter mystery placed within the context of the economy of salvation. In the absence of a deacon the priest himself or another concelebrating priest may announce the Easter proclamation. If, however, a lay cantor announces the proclamation, the words, ‘Therefore dearest friends’, up to the end of the invitation are omitted, along with the greeting, ‘The Lord be with you’.

(The Exsultet is traditionally sung to the Missal tone. The Music Makers have produced a Compact Disc as a guide and tutorial for priests and deacons in how to sing the Mass according to the new translation of the Roman Missal. It is called 'And with your Spirit' and includes the revised Exsultet and much more. The CD is available from St Paul’s Bookshops).

Liturgy of the Word
The proclamation of the Word of God is the fundamental element of the Easter Vigil. One of the unique aspects of the Easter Vigil is the recounting of the outstanding deeds of the history of salvation. These deeds are related in seven readings from the Old Testament chosen from the law and the prophets and two readings from the New Testament, namely from the apostles and from the gospel. Thus, the Lord “beginning with Moses and all the prophets” (Lk 24.27, 44-45) meets us once again on our journey and, opening up our minds and hearts, prepares us to share in the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup. The faithful are encouraged to meditate on these readings by the singing of a responsorial psalm, followed by a silent pause, and then by the celebrant’s prayer. The 3rd edition of the Roman Missal adds a sentence about the nine readings provided, saying that all of these must be read whenever it can be done, so that the character of a Vigil which takes place over some duration of time can be observed. After the final reading and its prayer, the Gloria is intoned. The Church bells and other bells are rung joyously.

The parts unique to the Vigil which should always be sung are:
- the acclamations during the procession with the paschal candle;
- the Easter Proclamation (Exsultet);
- the Gospel alleluia acclamation;
- the Litany of the Saints;
- the acclamation after the blessing of water.

Sacraments of Initiation
The planning for the baptismal liturgy should provide for its beauty and for the full preparation and participation of the assembly. Planners and ministers will have to work with both the Missal and the RCIA ritual books.

Christ’s Passover and ours are given full expression when baptismal water is blessed in the font and when Christian initiation takes place at the Easter Vigil. Even if there are no candidates for baptism, the blessing of baptismal water should take place in parish churches. When adults are baptised at the Vigil, the liturgy attains its fullness, for there is the paschal mystery of the Lord’s dying and rising in our midst. The fullness of the rite of baptism comes when immersion is possible (the pouring of water over the entire body). Parishes may want to work toward the fullness of this sign.

Those who are baptised (excepting infants), including adults and children who have been catechised and those received into full communion with the Church, are to be confirmed immediately afterwards by the presiding priest at the Easter Vigil liturgy.

The Eucharist
Care should be taken that, particularly in regard to this night’s celebration of the Eucharist, the liturgy is not done in haste and that all the rites and words should be given their full force. The 3rd edition of the Roman Missal has incorporated into itself rubrics found in nos. 241-243 of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. These allow for a commemoration of the baptised and their godparents to be made in the Eucharistic Prayer. After Mass, the Blessed Sacrament is restored to the tabernacle.

Concluding Rites The Solemn Blessing for the Easter Vigil may be used. The deacon/priest dismisses the people with a dismissal form that includes a double alleluia. The double alleluia is also to be used for the dismissal at all Masses throughout the octave of Easter.
EASTER SUNDAY

The Mass of Easter Day should be celebrated with great solemnity. The practice of celebrating baptismal Vespers is encouraged. At this celebration of Vespers psalms are sung and there is a procession to the font.

Sequence The Easter Sequence (Victimaes paschali laudes) is sung on Easter Sunday after the second reading and before the Gospel alleluia acclamation. The Sequence is also optional throughout the octave of Easter. Metrical versions are available, for example “O Flock of Christ, your homage bring” and “Christ the Lord is risen today!”

Renewal of Baptismal Promises The renewal of baptismal promises may replace the Creed on Easter Sunday. This is followed by a sprinkling of the people, with water blessed at the Easter Vigil.

THE EASTER SEASON

The Triduum is concluded liturgically with Evening Prayer on Easter Sunday. The Triduum leads us to the Easter season, the fifty days from Easter Sunday until after Evening Prayer on Pentecost Sunday.

When an optional memorial falls on a weekday of the Easter season, it is possible to choose either, the Office and Mass of the weekday, or the Office and Mass of the saint. Only when some genuine need or pastoral advantage requires it may an appropriate mass for various needs and intentions and votive masses be celebrated. Daily Masses for the Dead are prohibited. In the weekday Office, the Invitatory antiphon, the Hymn for the Office of Readings, for Lauds and for Vespers, and the antiphon at the middle Hour are taken from those prescribed for the season. To antiphons is added Alleluia, unless this is already present, or unless it does not well accord with the sense of the words.

Octave of Easter All of the days in the octave of Easter (the eight days from Easter Sunday through the Second Sunday of Easter) have the rank of Solemnity. Funeral Masses are permitted on the weekdays, but no other ritual Masses may be celebrated during this time.

Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling of Holy Water It is fitting that a Blessing and Sprinkling of Holy Water replace the Penitential Rite at Sunday Masses during the Easter season, including Pentecost.

Paschal Candle The Paschal Candle, a symbol of the presence of the risen Christ among the people of God, remains in the sanctuary or near the altar or ambo throughout the Easter Season. It is lighted in all of the more solemn liturgical celebrations in the Season of Easter.

PENTECOST

The fifty days of Eastertide conclude with Pentecost Sunday, when the Church recalls the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, the beginnings of the Church, and the start of her mission to all nations and tongues. The Vigil Mass of Pentecost is a celebration of more intense prayer, after the example of the Apostles and disciples, who gathered with Mary the Mother of Jesus as they awaited the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. (See Below) After Evening Prayer II on the solemnity of Pentecost, the Easter candle is placed near the baptismal font, where it should be displayed with honour, so that the candles of the baptised may be lit from its flame during the celebration of baptism. At funerals the Paschal candle is placed near the coffin, signifying that Christian death is the true Passover.

THE PENTECOST VIGIL

The 3rd edition of the Roman Missal makes provision for an extended form of the Vigil Mass. The Vigil is expanded to be a compliment to the Easter vigil which opened this season. This has been done for some time in Rome, as the Pope celebrates an outdoor evening Mass (in Saint Peters’ Square) in the darkness of the early evening. With Mary and the apostles we gather in prayer and vigil, praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.