

Chapter I: The Paschal Triduum & Easter Sunday

*“The Pasch breathes balm, is great, and was made for the faithful.
The Pasch opens for us the gates of Paradise, it sanctifies all believers.”* -ancient Greek hymn

The Paschal Triduum Holy Thursday

1. Lectionary for Holy Thursday¹

On Holy Thursday at the evening Mass the remembrance of the meal preceding the Exodus casts its own special light because of the Christ’s example in washing the feet of his disciples and Paul’s account of the institution of the Christian Passover in the Eucharist.

2. No Perpetual Exposition of Blessed Sacrament during Triduum

[Parishes or] Groups authorized to have perpetual exposition are bound to follow all the liturgical norms given in *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass*, nos. 82-100. Under no circumstances may perpetual exposition take place during the Easter Triduum.² The Easter Triduum begins with the evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper, reaches its high point in the Easter Vigil, and closes with evening prayer on Easter Sunday.³ **cf. numbers 9 and 12 below.**

3. Don’t empty the Font and stoops during Lent--but *do* empty them for the Triduum⁴

The following is a letter from the Congregation for Divine Worship on the subject. It certainly expresses the position of the Congregation in interpreting the liturgical tradition in this regard.

“This Dicastery is able to respond that the removing of Holy Water from the fonts during the season of Lent is not permitted, in particular, for two reasons:

The liturgical legislation in force does not foresee this innovation, which in addition to being *praeter legem* [ahead of the law] is contrary to a balanced understanding of the season of Lent, which though truly being a season of penance, is also a season rich in the symbolism of water and baptism, constantly evoked in liturgical texts.

¹ *Lectionary for Mass, editio typica altera*, (1981),[hereafter LM] Introduction, no. 99.

² *Responsum ad dubium* received by Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy. (*BCL Newsletter* Vol. XXI), June 1995.

³ *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar* [hereafter GNLY], no. 19.

⁴ Mario Marini, Undersecretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship, Letter 3/14/03: Prot. N. 569/00/L. (emphasis added).

The encouragement of the Church that the faithful avail themselves frequently of the [sic] of her sacraments is to be understood to apply also to the season of Lent. The “fast” and “abstinence” which the faithful embrace in this season does not extend to abstaining from the sacraments or sacramentals of the Church. **The practice of the Church has been to empty the Holy Water fonts on the days of the Sacred Triduum [after the Mass of the Lord’s Supper] in preparation of the blessing of the water at the Easter Vigil, and it corresponds to those days on which the Eucharist is not celebrated (i.e., Good Friday and Holy Saturday)."**

4. Empty the Tabernacle before Lord’s Supper

According to the *Sacramentary*, the tabernacle is to be completely empty before the celebration of the Mass of the Lord’s Supper. “Hosts for the communion of the faithful should be consecrated during that celebration. A sufficient amount of bread should be consecrated to provide also for communion on the following day.”⁵

During the days before the Triduum (i.e. Passion/Palm) Sunday and the first days of Holy Week), priests or others who prepare the bread and wine for Mass should see that only enough of the elements necessary for the communion of the faithful are consecrated. Only a few hosts need remain to provide for the possible need of communion for the sick or viaticum for the dying during Holy Week. This should, in fact, be the practice throughout the year.

It should be recalled that the reason the Church reserves the eucharist outside Mass is, primarily, the administration of viaticum to the dying and, secondarily, communion of the sick and those unable to attend Mass. The presence of the sacrament reserved for communion of the sick in churches led to the praiseworthy practice of adoration.⁶

The USCCB Committee for Divine Worship states it strongly: “Only under rare circumstances of necessity should the assembly at Mass communicate from the reserved sacrament in the tabernacle.”⁷ Again, this applies during the whole year, not just during the Triduum.

5. Reception of Holy Oils in Parishes

The new *Missale Romanum*, indicates the following in the rubrics for the Holy Thursday Chrism Mass: “...a reception of the Holy Oils may take place in every parish either before the celebration of the Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper or at another time that seems

⁵ Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. *Paschale Solemnitatis: Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts* [hereafter PS]. January 16, 1988. no. 48.

⁶ Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship. *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass* [hereafter HCWEOM]. no. 5. June 21, 1973; AAS 65 (1973): 610.

⁷ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Divine Worship. “Should Holy Communion be distributed from the tabernacle?” <http://www.catholicbishops.org/liturgy/q&a/mass/tabernacle.shtml>

appropriate.”⁸ A text for this can be found in the *Sacramentary Supplement 2004* published by Catholic Book Publishing Company. Since this rite can be a means of catechizing the faithful about the use and effects of the Holy Oils and Chrism in Christian life, it has been made available online. <http://www.usccb.org/liturgy/holyoils.shtml>

It also appears on the following page.

⁸ *Missale Romanum: editio typica tertia* [hereafter *MR ed. 3d*]. “Rubrics for Holy Thursday, Chrism Mass,” no. 15.

The Reception of the Holy Oils Blessed at the Chrism Mass

It is appropriate that the oil of the sick, the oil of catechumens, and the holy chrism, which are blessed by the bishop during the Chrism Mass, be presented to and received by the local parish community.

The reception of the holy oils may take place at the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday or on another day after the celebration of the Chrism Mass. The oils should be reserved in a suitable repository in the sanctuary or near the baptismal font.

The oils, in suitable vessels, are carried in the procession of the gifts, **before the bread and wine**, by members of the assembly.

The oils are received by the priest and are then placed on a suitably prepared table in the sanctuary or in the repository where they will be reserved.

As each of the oils is presented, the following or other words may be used to explain the significance of the particular oil. The people's response may be sung.

Presenter of the Oil of the Sick:

The oil of the sick.

Priest:

May the sick who are anointed with this oil experience the compassion of Christ and his saving love, in body and soul.

The people may respond:

Blessed be God forever.

Presenter of the Oil of Catechumens:

The oil of catechumens.

Priest:

Through anointing with this oil may our catechumens who are preparing to receive the saving waters of baptism be strengthened by Christ to resist the power of Satan and reject evil in all its forms.

The people may respond:

Blessed be God forever.

Presenter of the Holy Chrism:

The Holy Chrism.

Priest:

Through anointing with this perfumed Chrism may children and adults, who are baptized and confirmed, and presbyters, who are ordained, experience the gracious gift of the Holy Spirit.

The people may respond:

Blessed be God forever.

The bread and wine for the eucharist are then received and the Mass continues in the usual way.

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The Paschal Triduum

Holy Thursday

6. What is the proper way to dispose of old Holy Oils?

While the *Code of Canon Law* contains specifics on the use of the Holy Oils blessed by the diocesan bishop and distributed at the Chrism Mass, it does not contain explicit instructions for disposal of Holy Oils from the previous year which are being replaced. However, *The Book of Blessings* states: **“Each year when the bishop blesses the oils and consecrates the chrism, the pastor should see that the old oils are properly disposed of by burning and that they are replaced by the newly blessed oils.”**⁹

Burning the old oils may be accomplished by burning them in the Easter Fire at the Easter Vigil Mass, or at another time. An alternative to burning is burying the unused oils in a sacred place. A fitting place could be on the church grounds. There is no environmental concern as the oils and chrism essence are non-petroleum based (olive oil) and will be absorbed into the ground.

A corollary subject is the cleansing of the ambry vessels or other containers (oil stocks, etc.) that contained the old oils before newly blessed oils are added.

Ambry vessels and other containers should be cleansed with hot soapy water to dilute the olive oil and essence of chrism. This soapy water is best emptied into the *sacrarium* or emptied directly into the ground next to the church in a similar manner and location as recommended for burying old oils. After it appears that all traces of the old oils have been removed, the vessels and containers can be cleansed and dried in a normal fashion.

7. Whose Feet get washed?

The January 1998 issue of *The BCL Newsletter* stated:

The rite of washing feet should be seen as more than a mime in which the washing of the disciples’ feet is reenacted. It is a rite in which the presiding priest so closely joins himself with Christ’s act of perfect love, that the true nature of Christian love and discipleship is revealed. This is not just any act of service but is specifically a Gospel sign. Through this gesture, the community is encouraged to follow more closely the one who “*came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many*” (Matthew 20:28).¹⁰

The rubric for Holy Thursday, under the title WASHING OF FEET, reads:

⁹ *The Book of Blessings*, Chapter 32, “Order for the Blessing of a Repository for the Holy Oils,” *Introduction*, no. 1127.

¹⁰ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on the Liturgy. *Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) Newsletter*, “Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper”. January 1998 (Volume XXXIV, pg. 1). <http://www.usccb.org/liturgy/innews/198.shtml>

Depending on pastoral circumstance, the washing of feet follows the homily. The men who have been chosen (*viri selecti*) are led by the ministers to chairs prepared at a suitable place. Then the priest (removing his chasuble if necessary) goes to each man. With the help of the ministers he pours water over each one's feet and dries them.

Regarding the phrase *viri selecti*, the Chairman of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, after a review of the matter by the committee, authorized the following response which first appeared in *The BCL Newsletter* of February 1987. **As of March 2010, this is the latest statement of the USCCB on the question.** No subsequent legislation or instructions have necessitated a modification in the statement.

Question: What is the significance of the Holy Thursday foot washing rite?¹¹

Response:

- The Lord Jesus washed the feet of his disciples at the Last Supper as a sign of the new commandment that Christians should love one another: "*Such as my love has been for you, so must your love be for each other. This is how all will know you for my disciples: by your love for one another*" (see John 13, 34-35). For centuries the Church has imitated the Lord through the ritual enactment of the new commandment of Jesus Christ in the washing of feet on Holy Thursday.
- Although the practice had fallen into disuse for a long time in parish celebrations, it was restored in 1955 by Pope Pius XII as a part of the general reform of Holy Week. At that time the traditional significance of the rite of foot washing was stated by the Sacred Congregation of Rites in the following words:
Where the washing of feet, to show the Lord's commandment about fraternal charity, is performed in a Church according to the rubrics of the restored *Ordo* of Holy Week, the faithful should be instructed on the profound meaning of this sacred rite and should be taught that it is only proper that they should abound in works of Christian charity on this day.¹²
- The principal and traditional meaning of the Holy Thursday *mandatum*, as underscored by the decree of the Congregation, is the biblical injunction of Christian charity: Christ's disciples are to love one another. For this reason, the priest who presides at the Holy Thursday liturgy portrays the biblical scene of the gospel by washing the feet of some of the faithful.
- Because the gospel of the *mandatum* read on Holy Thursday also depicts Jesus as the "Teacher and Lord" who humbly serves his disciples by performing this extraordinary

¹¹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Divine Worship: "Holy Thursday Mandatum." <http://www.usccb.org/liturgy/q&a/generalfeet.shtml>

¹² Sacred Congregation of Rites: *Instruction on the Correct Use of the Restored Ordo of Holy Week*, November 16, 1955 (Washington, DC: National Catholic Welfare Conference Publications Office, 1955), page 6.

gesture which goes beyond the laws of hospitality,¹³ the element of humble service has accentuated the celebration of the foot washing rite in the United States over the last decade or more. In this regard, it has become customary in many places to invite both men and women to be participants in this rite in recognition of the service that should be given by all the faithful to the Church and to the world. Thus, in the United States, a variation in the rite developed in which not only charity is signified but also humble service.

- While this variation may differ from the rubric of the *Sacramentary* which mentions only men ("*virī selecti*"), it may nevertheless be said that the intention to emphasize service along with charity in the celebration of the rite is an understandable way of accentuating the evangelical command of the Lord, "who came to serve and not to be served," that all members of the Church must serve one another in love.
- The liturgy is always an act of ecclesial unity and Christian charity, of which the Holy Thursday foot washing rite is an eminent sign. All should obey the Lord's new commandment to love one another with an abundance of love, especially at this most sacred time of the liturgical year when the Lord's passion, death, and resurrection are remembered and celebrated in the powerful rites of the Triduum.¹⁴

The above states that in the Latin (Roman) rite dioceses of the United States it is not forbidden for other both men and women to have their feet washed on Holy Thursday. It is

¹³ In biblical times it was prescribed that the host of a banquet was to provide water (and a basin) so that his guests could wash their hands before sitting down to table. Although a host might also provide water for travelers to wash their own feet before entering the house, the host himself would not wash the feet of his guests. According to the *Talmud* the washing of feet was forbidden to any Jew except those in slavery.

In the controversies between Rabbi Hillel and Rabbi Shammai (cf. *Shabbat* 14a-b) Shammai ruled that guests were to wash their hands to correct "*tumat yadayim*" or "impurity of hands" (cf. Ex 30, 17 and Lv 15, 11). Priests were always to wash their hands before eating consecrated meals. The Pharisees held that all meals were in a certain sense "consecrated" because of table fellowship.

Jesus' action of washing the feet of his disciples was unusual for his gesture went beyond the required laws of hospitality (washing of hands) to what was, in appearance, a menial task. The Lord's action was probably unrelated to matters of ritual purity according to the Law.

¹⁴ For a brief overview of the restoration of the foot washing rite in 1955, see W. J. O'Shea, "Mandatum," New Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume IX, 146, and W. J. O'Shea, "Holy Thursday," New Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume VII, 105-107; Walter D. Miller, Revised Ceremonial of Holy Week (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Company, 1971), p. 43. See also Prosper Gueranger, OSB, The Liturgical Year, Volume VI, Passiontide and Holy Week (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1949), pp. 395-401. For the historical background of the many forms of this rite, see the following studies: Pier Franco Beatrice, *La lavanda dei piedi: Contributo alla storia delle antiche liturgie cristiane* (Rome: C.L.V. Edizioni Liturgiche, 1983); "Lotio pedum" in Hermann Schmidt, *Hebdomada Sancta*, Volume II (Rome: Herder, 1956-1957); Annibale Bugnini, CM, and C. Braga, CM, *Ordo Hebdomadae Sanctae Instauratus in Biblioteca "Ephemerides Liturgicae" Sectio Historica* 25 (Rome: Edizioni Liturgiche, 1956), pp. 73-75; Theodor Klauser, *A Short History of the Western Liturgy: An Account and Some Reflections*, second edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 81.

to be noted that the number twelve is not required by the rubrics. It is allowable to wash the feet of fewer than twelve, nor is twelve the upper limit of those to have their feet washed.

8. First Communion on Holy Thursday?

In addressing the issue of a child's reception of First Communion on Holy Thursday, *Redemptionis Sacramentum* states: "Apart from exceptional cases, it is not particularly appropriate for First Communion to be administered on Holy Thursday of the Lord's Supper."¹⁵

9. Eucharistic Procession and Adoration- Plenary Indulgence

A plenary indulgence [under the usual conditions] to the faithful who piously recite [or sing] the verses of the *Tantum ergo* ["Come adore this wondrous presence"] after the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday during the solemn reposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament.¹⁶

10. No Good Friday Liturgy? No Transfer of Blessed Sacrament Thursday

"This rite of transfer of the Blessed Sacrament may not be carried out if the liturgy of the Lord's Passion will not be celebrated in that same church on the following day."¹⁷ This rubric was omitted from the current U.S. edition (1985) of the *Sacramentary*, but it was restated in the 1988 Circular Letter.¹⁸ It is restored in a new rubric in the *Roman Missal (third edition)*: "If in the same church the celebration of the Lord's Passion on the following Friday does not take place, the Mass is concluded in the usual way [like any Sunday Mass] and the Blessed Sacrament is placed in the tabernacle."¹⁹

11. The Chapel of Repose: a Place for Prayer for the Whole Triduum

For the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, a place should be prepared and adorned in such a way as to be conducive to prayer and meditation; that sobriety appropriate to the liturgy

¹⁵ Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum*: On certain matters to be observed or to be avoided regarding the Most Holy Eucharist. March 25, 2004. no. 87.

¹⁶ Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary. *Manual of Indulgences: Norms and Grants*. trans. of *Enchiridion indulgentiarum quarto editur* (1999). (Washington, DC: USCCB Publishing, 2006) p.48.

¹⁷ Sacred Congregation of Rites. "Declaration of March 15, 1956," no. 3, AAS 48 (1956): 153; *Ordinationes et declarationes circa Ordinem hebdomadae sanctae instauratum*, no. 15, AAS 49 (1957): 93.

¹⁸ PS, no. 54. "This rite of transfer of the Blessed Sacrament may not be carried out if the liturgy of the Lord's passion will not be celebrated in that same church on the following day."

<http://www.wf-f.org/PaschaleSolemnitatis.html#anchor270734>

This is not something new. It goes back to the 1955 reforms of Holy Week. "Wherever the transfer and reposition of the Blessed Sacrament are held after the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, even if celebrated in the simple form, it is strictly required that the afternoon liturgical service of the Passion and Death of the Lord be also held on Good Friday in the same church or oratory." (Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Declaration Concerning the Restored Order of Holy Week*, March 15, 1956, no. 3).

¹⁹ MR ed. 3d: "Rubrics for The Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper" no. 4, as found in *The Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) Newsletter*; March/April 2003. This is not something new. It goes back to the 1955 reforms of Holy Week.

of these days is enjoined, to the avoidance or suppression of all abuses. If the Blessed Sacrament is ordinarily reserved in a chapel separated from the central part of the church, the place of repose and adoration will be there.²⁰ If there is no reservation chapel, then a space for reposition with a tabernacle should be prepared for the occasion.²¹

Popular piety is particularly sensitive to the adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament in the wake of the Mass of the Lord's Supper. Because of a long historical process, whose origins are not entirely clear, at some times in the Tradition the place of repose was referred to as a "a holy sepulchre". The faithful went to there to venerate Jesus who was placed in a tomb following the crucifixion and in which he remained for some forty hours.²²

Therefore, in reference to the altar of repose the terms "sepulchre" and "tomb" should be avoided; nor should its decoration have any suggestion of a tomb. The chapel of repose is not prepared as to represent the Lord's burial but for the custody of the eucharistic bread that will be distributed on Good Friday. The Blessed Sacrament remains in the Chapel of Reposition until the communion rite of the Liturgy of the Lord's Passion.²³

12. Adoration not Exposition

The rubrics for the procession on Holy Thursday read: "The Blessed Sacrament, accompanied by lighted candles and incense, is carried through the church to the chapel of reservation, to the singing of the hymn, "Pange lingua" or some other eucharistic song." The directives from the Congregation are very clear in this regard: "The Blessed Sacrament should be reserved in a closed tabernacle or pyx. Under no circumstances may it be exposed in a monstrance."²⁴ This is also clearly understood by the rubric describing the end of the procession with the Blessed Sacrament which reads: "The tabernacle of reposition is then closed."²⁵ After the Mass of the Lord's Supper, the faithful should be [strongly] encouraged to spend a suitable period of time during the night in the church in adoration before the reposed Blessed Sacrament.

It is necessary to instruct the faithful on the meaning of the reposition: it is an austere solemn conservation of the Body of Christ for the communion of the faithful in the liturgy of Good Friday and for viaticum. It is an invitation to silent and prolonged adoration of the wondrous sacrament instituted by Jesus on this day. Where appropriate, this prolonged

²⁰ PS, no. 49.

²¹ USCCB. *Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship, Guidelines of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops* [hereafter BLS]. November 16, 2000. no. 82.

²² Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines* [hereafter DPPL]. December 17, 2001. no. 141.

²³ DPPL, no. 141.

²⁴ PS, no. 55.

²⁵ *Sacramentary*, Rubric for Holy Thursday, "Transfer of the Holy Eucharist."

eucharistic adoration may be accompanied by the reading of some part of the Gospel of Saint John (e.g. chapters 13-17).²⁶

Some communities have established the custom of praying compline (night prayer) near midnight as the conclusion of the time of solemn adoration.

From midnight onward, however, adoration should be made without external solemnity, for the day of the Lord's passion has begun.²⁷ This means that all candles and flowers should be removed from the chapel of repose at midnight, save one candle burning before the tabernacle. Adoration in this simple form can continue through the night.

13. No Adoration/Exposition of the Precious Blood²⁸

In the April 2007 issue of Notitiæ (pages 182-183), the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments published a dubium on adoration of the Precious Blood. An unofficial translation of the dubium is proved here for the benefit of our readers:

Question: Whether it is permissible to expose the Most Precious Blood of Christ for Eucharistic adoration. **Response:** No, with the reasons given as below.

The reflection of the Congregation is as follows. The exposition of the Most Holy Eucharist can be made according to the norms of the liturgical books, using either a pyx or a monstrance (see *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*, no. 82) in accord with the sure teaching of the Church which states that Christ, complete, whole and entire is present as true sacrament, and can be consumed as such, under either species.

Norms now in force entirely prohibit the reservation of the Most Precious Blood of Christ after Mass has been celebrated, as can be read in the Instruction, *Inaestimabile donum*, no. 14 (1970): "On the other hand, the consecrated wine is to be consumed immediately after Communion and may not be kept. Care must be taken, however, to consecrate only the amount of wine needed for Communion." The same is also required by the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal (third typical edition)*, nos. 163, 182, 247, 249, and by the Instruction, *Redemptionis sacramentum* (2004), no. 17.

The law permits that, in a case of necessity as described by *The Code of Canon Law* (canon 925), the sick, who on account of their illness are not able to consume the Eucharist under the species of bread, may be permitted to communicate under the species of wine alone. In this

²⁶ PS, no. 56. The directive of HCWEOM (no. 95) should be borne in mind stating that during the time of adoration, "...prayers, songs and readings [from Sacred Scripture] direct the attention of the faithful to the worship of Christ the Lord. It is also desirable for the people to respond to the word of God by singing and to spend some periods of time in sacred silence."

²⁷ PS, no. 56.

²⁸ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Divine Worship. *BCDW Newsletter*, "Dubium on Adoration of the Precious Blood". September-October 2007 (Volume XLIII, pg. 42-3).

case, either a Mass is celebrated according to the local norm of law, so that the priest may be able to administer the Blood of Christ immediately; or after the Mass is celebrated in a church or oratory, the Most Precious Blood is reserved in the tabernacle in a suitably opaque vessel. However, when this kind of necessity occurs, none of the norms are to be neglected. As noted above, it is necessary to take Holy Communion within a very brief time, lest the species of consecrated wine be spoiled.

The Church forbids the reservation of the Most Precious Blood chiefly on account of the danger of the quick and inevitable spoilage of the species of wine, and also on account of the difficulty of storing and carrying the Most Blessed Sacrament without risk under this species for communion to the sick.

A fortiori, therefore, it is not permitted to reserve or to expose the Most Precious Blood of Christ for adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament, either by itself or together with a consecrated sacred host. As noted above, the use of a monstrance – in which there may be a vessel for holding the Blood of Christ – either for confecting the Eucharist or for holding it is to be condemned.

14. Celebrations of the Liturgy of the Hours

Communal celebrations of the Office of Readings and Morning Prayer on the mornings of Good Friday and Holy Saturday are **“highly recommended.”**²⁹ These **replace** the former offices of Matins and Lauds called *Tenebræ*, which had been celebrated in the evenings of Holy Thursday and Good Friday.

15. Sacred Paschal Fast - *Sacrum Ieiunium Paschale*

The Easter [Paschal] fast, from Holy Thursday evening [after the Mass of the Lord's Supper] through Holy Saturday [Easter Vigil], is sacred. According to ancient tradition, the Church fasts “because the Bridegroom has been taken away.”³⁰ Good Friday is a day of fasting *and* abstinence from flesh meat;³¹ it is also recommended, if possible, that the fast be continued on Holy Saturday until the Easter Vigil; so that the Church, with uplifted and welcoming heart, be ready to celebrate the joys of the Sunday of the Resurrection.³² The Elect [for baptism] are to be advised that on Holy Saturday they should refrain from their usual activities, spend their time in prayer and reflection, and, as far as they can, observe a fast.³³

²⁹ PS, nos. 40, 62, 73.

³⁰ PS, no. 39, quoting Mk 2:19-20; Tertullian, *De ieiunio* 2 et 13.

³¹ PS, no. 60.

³² Pope Paul VI. Apostolic Constitution *Paenitemini*, Feb. 17, 1966, II, 3; Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 110; *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar* [hereafter GNLY], no. 20; PS, no. 39.

³³ *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* [hereafter RCIA], nos. 22, 185.

The Paschal Triduum

Good Friday

16. Lectionary for Good Friday³⁴

On Good Friday the liturgical service has as its center John's narrative of the Passion of him who was proclaimed in Isaiah as the Servant of the Lord and who became the one High Priest by offering himself to the Father.

17. The Good Friday Liturgy and Popular Piety³⁵

The celebration of the Lord's passion is to take place in the afternoon, at about three o'clock. For pastoral reasons, in order to allow the people to assemble more easily, it is appropriate to celebrate at another time: either shortly after midday [noon], or in the evening; however it should not start later than nine o'clock [in the evening].³⁶

In the pastoral planning for Good Friday primary attention and maximum importance must be given to the solemn liturgical action and the faithful must be brought to realize that no other exercise can objectively substitute for this liturgical celebration of the Lord's Passion.³⁷

Devotions, such as the Way of the Cross, processions of the passion, and commemorations of the sorrows (*dolors*) of the Blessed Virgin Mary are not, for pastoral reasons, to be neglected.³⁸ It is necessary, however, to ensure that such manifestations of popular piety, either by time or the manner in which the faithful are convoked, do not become a surrogate for the liturgical celebration of Good Friday. Such devotions should be assigned to a time of day that makes it quite clear that the liturgical celebration, by its very nature, far surpasses them in importance.³⁹

In practice, this means that the "prime" time for the community to gather should be the time for the Liturgy of Good Friday. For example, it would run counter to this principle for the parish's celebration of the Lord's Passion at noon be attended by 60 elders of the parish while the "Youth Living Stations" at 7 pm draws a crowd of 300.

³⁴ LM, no. 99.

³⁵ For an excellent summary of the Church's approved expressions of popular piety and the Triduum, see DPPL, nos. 127-149. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20020513_vers-direttorio_en.html#DECREE

³⁶ PS, 63.

³⁷ DPPL, no. 143.

³⁸ PS, no. 72.

³⁹ DPPL, no. 143.

18. Deacons or Lay Presiders on Good Friday?⁴⁰

At the present time, there is no provision for a lay person to lead the [Good Friday Liturgy] Celebration of the Lord's Passion and Death, even in the absence of a priest or deacon.

The question of a deacon presiding at the Celebration of the Lord's Passion in the absence of a priest was discussed by the NCCB Committee on the Liturgy in June of 1994. It was the unanimous opinion of the Committee that, "...the *Sacramentary* makes no specific provision for such a practice."

19. Proclamation of the Passion⁴¹

The proclamation of the Passion needs to be carefully prepared. Traditionally it is sung or read by three persons taking the parts of Christ, the narrator, and others. The Passion is to be proclaimed by deacons, or, in their absence, by priests, or in their absence, by readers. In the last case, however, the part of Christ should be reserved for the priest celebrant.

It may be helpful, for example, to divide the narrative into sections, with different readers and some variation in the posture of the assembly for each part. While it has a dramatic quality, the passion is not so much enacted as proclaimed solemnly and simply, without candles, greeting, or signs of the cross.

In preaching on the Passion, special care should be taken not to show the Jewish people in an unfavorable way. The crimes during the Passion of Christ cannot be attributed indiscriminately to all Jews of that time, nor to Jews today. The Jewish people should not be referred to as though rejected or cursed, as if this view followed from Scripture. As the Church has always held, Christ freely suffered his passion and death because of the sins of all, that all might be saved. This is also the way in which the liturgical texts of Good Friday, such as the Reproaches, are understood by the Church.

20. The Jewish People and Preaching the Passion Narratives⁴²

Because of the tragic history of the "Christ-killer" charge as providing a rallying cry for anti-Semites over the centuries, a strong and careful homiletic stance is necessary to combat its lingering effects today. Homilists and catechists should seek to provide a proper context for the proclamation of the passion narratives. A particularly useful and detailed discussion of the theological and historical principles involved in presentations of the passions can be found in *Criteria for the Evaluation of Dramatizations of the Passion* issued by the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (March 1988). Please click the link below to read the *Criteria*: <http://www.usccb.org/seia/CRITERIA.PDF>

⁴⁰ *The Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) Newsletter*; January 1998.

⁴¹ *The Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) Newsletter*; January 1998.

⁴² United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Bishop's Committee on the Liturgy. *God's Mercy Endures Forever: Guidelines on the Presentation of Jews and Judaism in Catholic Preaching*. September, 1988; nos. 21-25. <http://www.usccb.org/liturgy/godsmercy.shtml>

The message of the liturgy in proclaiming the passion narratives in full is to enable the assembly to see vividly the love of Christ for each person, despite their sins, a love that even death could not vanquish. "Christ in his boundless love freely underwent his passion and death because of the sins of all so that all might attain salvation" (*Nostra Aetate*, no. 4). To the extent that Christians over the centuries made Jews the scapegoat for Christ's death, they drew themselves away from the paschal mystery. For it is only by dying to one's sins that we can hope to rise with Christ to new life. This is a central truth of the Catholic faith stated by the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* in the sixteenth century and reaffirmed by the 1985 Notes (no. 30).⁴³

It is necessary to remember that the passion narratives do not offer eyewitness accounts or a modern transcript of historical events. Rather, the events have had their meaning focused, as it were, through the four theological "lenses" of the gospels. By comparing what is shared and what distinguishes the various gospel accounts from each other, the homilist can discern the core from the particular optics of each. One can then better see the significant theological differences between the passion narratives. These differences also are part of the inspired Word of God.

Certain historical essentials are shared by all four accounts: a growing hostility against Jesus on the part of some Jewish religious leaders (note that the Synoptic gospels do not mention the Pharisees as being involved in the events leading to Jesus' death, but only the "chief priests, scribes, and elders"); the Last Supper with the disciples; betrayal by Judas; arrest outside the city (an action conducted covertly by the Roman and Temple authorities because of Jesus' popularity among his fellow Jews); interrogation before a high priest (not necessarily a Sanhedrin trial); formal condemnation by Pontius Pilate (cf. the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, which mention only Pilate, even though some Jews were involved); crucifixion by Roman soldiers; affixing the title "King of the Jews" on the cross; death; burial; and resurrection. Many other elements, such as the crowds shouting "His blood be on us and on our children" in Matthew, or the generic use of the term "the Jews" in John, are unique to a given author and must be understood within the context of that author's overall theological scheme. Often, these unique elements reflect the perceived needs and emphases of the author's particular community at the end of the first century, after the split between Jews and Christians was well underway. The bitterness toward synagogue Judaism seen in John's gospel (e.g., Jn 9:22;16:2) most likely reflects the bitterness felt by John's own community after its "parting of the ways" with the Jewish community, and the martyrdom of St. Stephen illustrates that verbal disputes could, at times, lead to violence by Jews against fellow Jews who believed in Jesus.

Christian reflection on the passion should lead to a deep sense of the need for reconciliation with the Jewish community today. Pope John Paul II has said:

Considering history in the light of the principles of faith in God, we must also reflect on the catastrophic event of the *Shoah* [Holocaust]

Considering this mystery of the suffering of Israel's children, their witness of hope, of faith, and of humanity under dehumanizing outrages, the Church

⁴³ "Neither all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his Passion. . . . [T]he Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed as if this followed from holy Scripture." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 597; citing Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* [*Nostra Aetate*; NA], no. 4)

experiences ever more deeply her common bond with the Jewish people and with their treasure of spiritual riches in the past and in the present" (*Address to Jewish Leadership*, Miami, September 11, 1987).

21. Veneration-Adoration of the Cross & Procession

After the proclamation of the Passion and the General Intercessions, the entire assembly rise to venerate the cross or crucifix [in procession]. The personal adoration of the cross is an important feature in this celebration and every effort should be made to achieve it.⁴⁴ The cross used for the veneration; of appropriate size and beauty, with the splendor worthy of the mystery of our salvation, should be of sufficient size to be held easily, be carried in procession, and be venerated. After the veneration, the cross remains in the sanctuary.⁴⁵

The antiphons *We worship you, Lord (Adoremus te Christe)*, the *Reproaches*, the hymns *Faithful Cross (Crux Fidelis inter omnes)*, and *Abroad the Royal Banners Fly [Vexilla Regis]*, or other suitable songs are sung. Totally new in the *Missale* is the indication: "According to local circumstances or traditions of the people and pastoral appropriateness, the *Stabat Mater dolorosa (At the Cross her Station Keeping)* may be sung, or another appropriate chant in memory of the compassion of the Blessed Virgin Mary."⁴⁶

22. Adoration of the Cross - Plenary Indulgence

A plenary indulgence is granted [under the usual conditions] to the faithful, who in the solemn liturgical action of Good Friday devoutly assist at the adoration of the Cross.⁴⁷

23. Holy Communion

The new rubric is specific that either the deacon or priest bringing the Blessed Sacrament to the altar puts on a humeral veil.⁴⁸ After Communion either the deacon or another suitable minister takes the ciborium to a place prepared outside the church [the chapel of repose], or, if circumstances require, may place it in the tabernacle.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ USCCB, Committee on Divine Worship, *Fourteen Questions on the Paschal Triduum*, #8.

⁴⁵ PS, no. 68; BLS, no. 83.

⁴⁶ MR ed. 3d: "Rubrics for Good Friday" no. 20; as found in *The Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) Newsletter*; March / April, 2003.

⁴⁷ Apostolic Penitentiary. *Enchiridion indulgentiarum quarto editur* (1999). «Plenaria indulgentia conceditur christifideli qui in sollemni actione liturgica feriae VI in Passione et Morte Domini adorationi Crucis pie interfuerit.»

⁴⁸ MR ed. 3d: "Rubrics for Good Friday" no. 22; as found in *The Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) Newsletter*; March / April, 2003.

⁴⁹ MR ed. 3d: "Rubrics for Good Friday" no. 29; as found in *The Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) Newsletter*; March / April, 2003.

24. Prayer in the Presence of the Cross ⁵⁰

An appropriate place; for example, the chapel of repose used for reservation of the eucharist on Holy Thursday, can be prepared and there the Lord's Cross is placed so that the faithful may also venerate and kiss it and spend some time in meditation after the Liturgy of the Lord's Passion.

The Paschal Triduum

Holy Saturday

25. Keeping Holy Saturday

On Holy Saturday, the Church is, as it were, at the Lord's tomb, meditating on his passion and death and on his descent into hell, awaiting his resurrection with prayer and fasting.⁵¹ The Elect are to be advised that on Holy Saturday they should refrain from their usual activities, spend their time in prayer and reflection, and, as far as they can, observe a fast.⁵²

Again, it is highly recommended that on this day, the Office of Readings and Morning Prayer be celebrated with the participation of the people. Where this cannot be done, there should be some celebration of the Word of God or some act of devotion suited to the mystery celebrated this day.⁵³

An image of Christ crucified, or lying in the tomb, or the descent into hell, which mystery Holy Saturday recalls; or also an image of the *sorrowful* (dolorous) Virgin Mary (*pietà*), can be placed in the church itself or in the chapel of repose used for the reservation and adoration on Holy Thursday and the prayer in the presence of the Cross on Good Friday for the veneration of the faithful.⁵⁴

Since the sacred Paschal fast continues on Holy Saturday, festive customs and traditions associated with this day (on account of the former [pre-1955] practice of anticipating the celebration of the Easter Vigil early on Holy Saturday morning) should be reserved for Holy Saturday night after the Vigil and for Easter day.⁵⁵

For parishes with members of the Elect, *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, in numbers 185-205, provides for the ancient practice of the recitation of the Creed (*redditio*

⁵⁰ PS, no. 71.

⁵¹ PS, no. 73.

⁵² *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* [hereafter RCIA], nos. 22, 185.

⁵³ PS, no. 73.

⁵⁴ PS, no. 74.

⁵⁵ PS, no. 76.

symboli), as well the *ephphetha* rite, and the choosing of a Christian name.⁵⁶ On the anointing with the oil of catechumens on this day, see #31 below.

26. Time of the Paschal (Easter) Vigil:

The entire celebration of the Easter Vigil takes place at night. It should not begin before nightfall; it should end before daybreak on Sunday. This rule is to be taken according to its strictest sense.⁵⁷

The Easter Vigil does not correspond to the usual Saturday evening anticipated Mass, and its character is unique in the cycle of the liturgical year. It ought to take place at night.⁵⁸

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments observes that the kinds of objections raised to holding the Paschal Vigil at night are not raised when it comes to midnight Masses at Christmas or other gatherings of various kinds.⁵⁹

To light a fire and candles and speak of “this holy night,” and “Christ the Morning Star,” while there is still light on the western horizon is literally anachronistic!

The intention of the *Missale Romanum* is clear: the Easter Vigil is to take place in darkness. Thus the approved translation of ‘*post initium noctis*’ is, “after nightfall;” that is, after the time in the evening when daylight is last visible. This time is equivalent to astronomical twilight, which is defined by the Naval Observatory as the time after which “the Sun does not contribute to sky illumination.”⁶⁰ The Vigil should not begin at civil twilight.⁶¹

Civil twilight is defined to begin in the morning, and to end in the evening when the center of the Sun is geometrically 6 degrees below the horizon (roughly 30 minutes after sunset). **For those who are hunters, this is why we can hunt half an hour before sunrise and after sunset; because it is still quite light enough to see!**

Nautical twilight is defined to begin in the morning, and to end in the evening, when the center of the sun is geometrically 12 degrees below the horizon (roughly 1 hour after sunset).

⁵⁶ RCIA, no. 22.

⁵⁷ PS, no. 78.

⁵⁸ MR ed. 3d: “Rubrics for The Easter Vigil” no.3, as found in *The Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) Newsletter*; January 2003.

⁵⁹ PS, no. 78.

⁶⁰ *The Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) Newsletter*; March 2001.

⁶¹ “Another 45 minutes or one hour should be added to that time [civil twilight] in order to determine the approximate time of nightfall.” *The Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) Newsletter*; January 2003. p. 1.

Astronomical twilight is defined to begin in the morning, and to end in the evening when the center of the Sun is geometrically 18 degrees below the horizon (**roughly an hour and a half after sunset**).

For sunrise / sunset data for any given day: http://aa.usno.navy.mil/data/docs/RS_OneDay.php

The Paschal Triduum

Elements of the Paschal (Easter) Vigil

27. The Service of Light

In a suitable place outside the Church, a “blazing fire” (*rogus ardens*)⁶² 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. The rubrics, however, acknowledge that when this cannot be done [outside] adaptations may be made.⁶³

1. In some circumstances parishes may be able to create a permanent place for lighting the Easter fire. In others, the rite may be conducted in the gathering area immediately outside the church. While safety is always an important consideration, a flame to ‘dispel the darkness and light up the night’ is needed to achieve the full symbolism of the fire.

2. In climates and circumstances where weather precludes lighting the fire outdoors, a more limited fire can be enkindled indoors with the proper accommodations for ventilation, for heat and smoke detectors, for local fire regulations, and for surrounding the space with non-combustible materials.⁶⁴

This [Easter] 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.⁶⁵ Just as the children of Israel were guided at night by the pillar of fire, so Christians follow the risen Christ.

28. Easter Proclamation-Exsultet

The *Exsultet* is very ancient; already attested in the liturgies of Italy, Gaul, Spain and North Africa by the time of St. Ambrose and St. Augustine (4th- 5th century). This poetic text captures the whole Easter mystery placed within the context of the economy of salvation.

Before the Easter Proclamation, the bishop or priest gives his candle to one of the ministers and blesses incense as at the Gospel during Mass. The deacon goes to the bishop or priest and asks for a blessing. The bishop or priests says (in a low voice) “**The Lord be in your heart and on your lips, that you may worthily proclaim his Easter Praise. In the name of the**

⁶² ICEL originally translated this as a ‘**BONFIRE**’. The fire is meant to be significant!

⁶³ MR ed. 3d: “Rubrics for The Easter Vigil,” as found in *The Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) Newsletter*; January 2003.

⁶⁴ BLS, no. 84.

⁶⁵ MR ed. 3d: “Rubrics for The Easter Vigil” nos. 8-10; as found in *The Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) Newsletter*; January 2003.

Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” The deacon replies, **“Amen.”**⁶⁶ Having asked for and received the blessing, the deacon announces the Easter proclamation from the ambo or at a lectern. At the ambo or a lectern near the Easter candle, the deacon, or presbyter incenses the book and sings the Easter proclamation. In the absence of a deacon the priest himself or another concelebrating priest may announce the Easter proclamation.⁶⁷

If, however, a lay cantor announces the proclamation, the words, **My dearest friends...**, up to the end of the invitation are omitted, along with the greeting, **The Lord be with you.**⁶⁸ Without incensing, a lay cantor proclaims the Easter proclamation from the ambo (or another suitable place).

29. The Liturgy of the Word

At the Vigil on the holy night of Easter there are seven Old Testament readings which recall the wonderful works of God in the history of salvation. There are two New Testament readings, the announcement of the Resurrection according to one of the Synoptic Gospels and a reading from St. Paul on Christian baptism as the sacrament of Christ's Resurrection.⁶⁹

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 2002 edition of the *Missale* adds a sentence about the nine readings proposed, 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.”** The new *Missale* recognizes that “nevertheless, where **grave** pastoral circumstances demand it, the number of readings from the Old Testament may be reduced.” At least three readings from the Old Testament [must] be read always including Exodus 14. The reference found previously in the *Missale* to the possibility of having only two Old Testament readings in extreme necessity is now omitted.⁷⁰ The faithful are encouraged to meditate on these readings by the singing of a responsorial psalm, followed by a silent pause for prayer, and then by the celebrant's prayer [collect].

⁶⁶ *Ceremonial of Bishops* [hereafter, *CB*], no. 344.

⁶⁷ “When a presbyter rather than a deacon is to sing the Easter proclamation [with the bishop presiding], he also, like the deacon, goes to receive a blessing from the bishop. But when it is necessary to have a lay cantor sing the Easter proclamation, the cantor does not go to the bishop for the blessing, does not incense the book, nor say the bracketed words in the proclamation...”. *CB*, footnote 87, page 116.

⁶⁸ *MR ed. 3d*: “Rubrics for The Easter Vigil” nos.18-19; as found in *The Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) Newsletter*; January 2003.

⁶⁹ *LM*, no. 99.

⁷⁰ *MR ed. 3d*: “Rubrics for The Easter Vigil” nos. 20-21; as found in *The Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) Newsletter*; January 2003 (emphasis added).

30. The Easter Alleluia

Having 'fasted' from the *Alleluia* for all of Lent, this night is the joyful renewal of this song of Easter praise. The importance of this ritual element is seen in two places in the ritual books.

First, in the *Ceremonial of Bishops* it notes: "one of the deacons or the reader goes to the bishop and says to him, '**Most Reverend Father, I bring you a message of great joy, the message of Alleluia.**'" This shows the unique place the Easter *Alleluia* occupies.⁷¹

Secondly, the *Missale Romanum* is very specific about singing the *Alleluia* before the Gospel: "**After the Epistle has been read, all rise, and the priest [or if necessary, the psalmist or cantor] solemnly intones [sings] the Alleluia three times, raising his [her] voice a step each time. All repeat the Alleluia each time.**" Mention is then made of the psalmist or cantor singing Psalm 118 and the people responding, "*Alleluia.*"⁷² This psalm is often recited by the apostles in their Easter preaching (see Acts 4:11-12; Mt 21:42; Mk 12:10; Lk 20:17).

Whoever intones the Alleluia: be it bishop, priest, deacon, or cantor; the singing of the Easter Alleluia should be a significant ritual moment in the Paschal Vigil.

The *Missale* directs explicitly that the homily, even if it is brief, is not to be omitted. This requires that the homilist carefully prepare and craft the homily so that it captures the tremendous mysteries being celebrated on this most holy of nights.⁷³

31. Baptism and Christian Initiation at the Vigil

Water is the key symbol of baptism and the focal point of the font. In this water believers die to sin and are reborn to new life in Christ.⁷⁴ Every effort should be made to baptize by immersion, or at least by partial immersion. Baptism by immersion is the fuller and more expressive sign of the sacrament and, therefore, is preferred. Although it is not yet a common practice in the United States, provision should be made for its more frequent use in baptism of adults. At the least, the provision of *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* for partial immersion, namely, immersion of the candidate's head, should be taken into account.⁷⁵

⁷¹ CB, no. 352

⁷² MR ed. 3d: "Rubrics for The Easter Vigil" no. 34; as found in *The Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) Newsletter*; January 2003.

⁷³ MR ed. 3d: "Rubrics for The Easter Vigil" no. 36; as found in *The Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) Newsletter*; January 2003.

⁷⁴ BLS, no. 68.

⁷⁵ USCCB. *National Statutes for the Catechumenate*, no. 17. [hereafter *National Statutes for the Catechumenate*] Complementary Norms. <http://www.usccb.org/norms/788-3.htm> In accord with canon 788 §3, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops decrees that the *National Statutes for the Catechumenate* should govern the catechumenate in the United States. Approved: General Meeting, November 1986 Reviewed: Holy See (Congregation for Divine Worship), Letter from Apostolic Pro-Nuncio (Prot. No. 2757/88/4) July 1988. Promulgated: Memorandum to All Bishops, July 22, 1988.

Whether baptism is by immersion or infusion (pouring) a **generous amount of water** used must, “serve in individual cases and in the various traditions and circumstances to ensure the clear understanding that this washing is not a mere purification rite but the sacrament of being joined to Christ.”⁷⁶ Therefore in the celebration of baptism the washing with water should take on its full importance as the sign of that mystical sharing in Christ’s death and resurrection through which those who believe in his name die to sin and rise to eternal life.⁷⁷

Because the rites of initiation of the Church begin with baptism and are completed by the reception of the Eucharist, the baptismal font and its location reflect the Christian’s journey *through* the waters of baptism *to* the altar.⁷⁸

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, [“Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation,” nos. 206 – 243; “The Rite of Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church,” nos. 473 – 498; “The Combined Celebration at the Easter Vigil of the Sacraments of Initiation and of the Rite of Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church,” nos. 562- 94] should always be consulted in conjunction with the rubrics mentioned in the *Missale*. This is especially true when Baptisms are taking place by means of immersion.

Christ’s Passover and ours are given full expression when baptismal water is blessed in the font and when the Christian initiation of adults, or, at least the baptism of infants, 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. At the very least, baptism should be commemorated by the blessing of water intended for sprinkling upon the people.

During the Easter Vigil, the three Sacraments of Initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist—are ordinarily celebrated. The assembly should join in singing responses and acclamations during the Litany of the Saints, the acclamations for and at the conclusion of the blessing prayer over the baptismal water, and the acclamations following each Baptism.⁷⁹

The rubrics describe two instances of Baptism at the Vigil. [First,] If there is a procession to the baptistery or the font, the catechumens are called forward and presented by their godparents. If there are children, they are carried by their parents and godparents to the front of the assembly. Those who are to be baptized, along with their godparents, are led first by a minister with the Easter candle; the other ministers, deacons and priest follow after them. This procession is accompanied by the singing of the Litany of the Saints. The priest then gives the introductory statement. [Second,] If the Baptisms take place in the sanctuary, the priest makes the introductory statement and this is followed by the singing of the Litany of the Saints.

⁷⁶ RCIA, no. 213.

⁷⁷ RCIA, no. 213.

⁷⁸ BLS, no. 66.

⁷⁹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, issued November 14, 2007, no. 206. [hereafter, *STL*].

Numbers 48 to 53 of the rubrics for the Easter Vigil of the *Missale Romanum* [editio typica tertia] describe the initiation process. As was mentioned before, it is important to closely consult *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* on this matter. Number 48 of the rubrics for the Easter Vigil mentions that after the renunciation and profession of faith “if the anointing with the Oil of Catechumens did not take place beforehand, as part of the immediate preparatory rites, it takes place at this moment.” However, number 33 of *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* [USA edition] contains a contravening directive:

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops approves the omission of the anointing with the oil of catechumens both in the celebration of baptism and in the optional preparation rites for Holy Saturday. **Thus, anointing with the oil of catechumens is reserved for use in the period of the catechumenate and in the period of purification and enlightenment [during Lent], and is not to be included in the purification rites on Holy Saturday or in the celebration of initiation at the Easter Vigil or at another time.**⁸⁰

It is preferable that the reception into full communion [of candidates from non-Catholic ecclesial communities] **not** take place at the Easter Vigil lest there be confusion of such baptized Christians with the [unbaptized Elect] for baptism, possible misunderstanding of or even reflection upon the sacrament of baptism celebrated in another Church or ecclesial community, or any perceived triumphalism in the liturgical welcome into the Catholic Eucharistic community.⁸¹ Rather, the reception of candidates into full communion should ordinarily take place at the Sunday Eucharist of the parish community.⁸²

There may be a song between the celebration of Baptism and Confirmation, especially if the neophytes need to change into dry clothing or if there is a procession from the font to the sanctuary. A song may also be sung during Confirmation as the neophytes are anointed with chrism, especially if a large number of persons are being confirmed.⁸³

If infants are baptized, the presentation of a lighted candle is omitted at the Easter Vigil, as is the *ephphetha* prayer.⁸⁴

When there are no Baptisms and the font is not to be blessed, the *Litany of Saints* is omitted and the blessing of water takes place at once.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ RCIA, no. 33 (USA edition).

⁸¹ *National Statutes for the Catechumenate*, no. 33.

⁸² *National Statutes for the Catechumenate*, no. 32.

⁸³ STL, no. 206.

⁸⁴ *Rite of Baptism of Children*, Introduction, no. 28.

⁸⁵ MR ed. 3d: “Rubrics for The Easter Vigil” nos. 39-41; as found in *The Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) Newsletter*; January 2003.

32. The Baptismal Garment for Adults⁸⁶

The common practice in the dioceses of this country is to use an alb or other white garment, though the practice of using a colored garment or even a chasuble or dalmatic has begun to appear in some places. *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* describes the garment as “white or some other color according to local custom.”⁸⁷ *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* is quite clear that since vesture symbolizes the function of the one who wears it (GIRM 335, 336), the chasuble is reserved for priests and the dalmatic for deacons (337, 338). Other ministers may wear albs (336).

Thus it would seem that the most appropriate vesture for neophytes would be a white garment, probably in the shape of an alb or choir robe. If a baptismal garment is not specially created, an alb or white choir robe could appropriately be used. In no instance should those who are not ordained be vested in chasuble, stole or dalmatic.

33. Renewal of Baptismal Promises-Plenary Indulgence

A plenary indulgence is granted [under the usual conditions] to the faithful who, at the celebration of the Easter Vigil or on the anniversary of their own baptism, renew their baptismal vows in any legitimately approved formula.⁸⁸

34. Liturgy of 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 *Missale* 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 baptized and their godparents to be made in the Eucharistic Prayer. Proper formulas are found in the *Roman Missal* for each of the Eucharistic prayers.⁸⁹ *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* indicates that these formulas are found in the section for Ritual Masses in the *Sacramentary*, “Christian Initiation: Baptism.”

The *Missale* reminds the priest that before he says, *This is the Lamb of God*, he may make a brief remark to the neophytes about their first Communion and, “about the preciousness of so great a mystery, which is the climax of initiation and the center of the Christian life.”⁹⁰ In n[umber] 65 the rubrics for the Easter Vigil indicate the desirability for the neophytes as well as

⁸⁶ *The Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) Newsletter*; February 2000, p.6.

⁸⁷ RCIA, no. 220.

⁸⁸ Apostolic Penitentiary. *Manual of Indulgences: Norms and Grants*. trans. of *Enchiridion Indulgentiarum quarto editur* (1999). (Washington, DC: USCCB Publishing, 2006) p.98.

⁸⁹ MR ed. 3d: “Rubrics for The Easter Vigil” no. 63; as found in *The Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) Newsletter*; January 2003.

⁹⁰ MR ed. 3d: “Rubrics for The Easter Vigil” no. 64; as found in *The Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) Newsletter*; January 2003.

all the faithful, if the diocesan Bishop consents, to receive Communion under both kinds.

The *Missale* provides a solemn blessing to conclude the liturgy. It is used in place and can presently be found in the *Sacramentary* at no. 6, “Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday”.⁹¹ It is also possible to use the formula of the final blessing in the *Order of Baptism for Children*, according to circumstances [i.e., if infants and little children rather than adults have been baptized].

35. Sung Dismissal

At the end of Masses on Easter the dismissal is sung by the deacon or priest; to which the people respond in song, “Thanks be to God, Alleluia! Alleluia!”⁹²

Easter Sunday

36. Lectionary for Easter Day⁹³

The Gospel reading for the Mass on Easter day is from John on the finding of the empty tomb. There is also, however, the option to use the Gospel texts from the Easter Vigil or, when there is an evening Mass on Easter Sunday, to use the account in Luke of the Lord’s appearance to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. The first reading is from the Acts of the Apostles, which throughout the Easter season replaces the Old Testament reading. The reading from the Apostle Paul concerns the living out of the paschal mystery in the Church.

37. The Easter Sequence - *Victimae Paschali Laudes*

The Sequence is a liturgical hymn that is sung [after the responsorial psalm and second reading] before the Gospel Acclamation [*Alleluia*] on certain days. On Easter Sunday (*Victimae Paschali Laudes*) and Pentecost Day (*Veni Sancte Spiritus*), the sequence is required.⁹⁴ The sequence *Lauda Sion Salvatorem* is optional on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of the Lord (*Corpus Christi*); and *Stabat Mater dolorosa* is an optional sequence on the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows (September 15th). About the use of the *Stabat Mater* on Good Friday, see # 21 above.

The Sequence may be sung by all together, or in alternation between the congregation and choir and cantor, or by the choir or cantor alone. The text from the *Lectionary for Mass* may be used, or a metrical paraphrase may be sung, provided that it is found in an approved collection of liturgical songs (i.e. a Catholic hymnal).⁹⁵

⁹¹ MR ed. 3d: “Rubrics for The Easter Vigil” no. 69; as found in *The Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) Newsletter*; January 2003.

⁹² CB, no. 370.

⁹³ LM, no. 99.

⁹⁴ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* [hereafter GIRM] 2002, no. 64.

⁹⁵ STL, nos. 165-166.

It would be of great pastoral advantage to make note of the origins and purpose of the sequence in the introduction to the Liturgy.

38. Blessing of Food for the First Meal of Easter⁹⁶

The custom of blessing food for Easter arose from the discipline of fasting throughout Lent and the special [Paschal] Easter fast during the Triduum. Easter was the first day when meat, eggs, and other foods could again be eaten. As noted above, Good Friday is a day of fasting *and* abstinence from flesh meat; it is also recommended that the fast be continued on Holy Saturday through the Easter Vigil. According to custom, food may be blessed for consumption at the first meal of Easter, when fasting is ended and the Church is filled with joy in the Resurrection. The texts for this Blessing are found in the *Book of Blessings*, numbers. 1701-1723.

39. Blessing the Family Home with Easter Water⁹⁷

Among the pious exercises connected with Easter Sunday, mention must be made of the traditional blessing of eggs, the symbol of life, and the blessing of the family table; this latter, which is a daily habit in many Christian families that should be encouraged, is particularly important on Easter Sunday: the head of the household or some other member of the household, blesses the festive meal with Easter water which is brought by the faithful from the Easter Vigil.

If this custom is encouraged in a parish, it would be well to alert people to this custom, and even to make vessels available for taking Easter water home as well as providing texts for use in the home.

40. Easter Vespers

The greatest mysteries of the redemption are celebrated yearly by the Church; beginning with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday and ending with [second] Vespers of Easter Sunday.⁹⁸

It is fitting that evening prayer be celebrated in a more solemn way to mark the ending of so holy a day and to commemorate the occasions when the Lord showed himself to his disciples. Great care should be taken to maintain, where it exists, the particular tradition of celebrating evening prayer on Easter Sunday in honor of baptism. During this there is a procession of the baptized to the font or baptistery as the psalms and canticles are sung on the way to the baptistery.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ *Book of Blessings*, nos. 1701-1723.

⁹⁷ *DPPL*, no. 150.

⁹⁸ *PS*, no. 38.

⁹⁹ *General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours*, no. 213; see also *CB*, no. 296; *DPPL*, no. 245.