

Celebrating the Easter Events in Your Parish

THREE-DAY EASTER EVENT

When the new Roman Calendar discusses Holy Week and Easter, it stresses that God's glory and our salvation were accomplished principally through the dying and rising of Jesus, his Passover through death to new life. His death destroyed our death in sin, and his rising made it possible for us to rise out of baptism into the new life of grace. So the three-day celebration of his suffering, dying and rising is the peak of the liturgical year, progressing from the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper through the Easter Vigil to Vespers of Easter Sunday (par. 18, 19):

To understand this apparently new but traditional terminology, we must remember that the events of Holy Thursday evening, Good Friday and Holy Saturday night are not distinct

of the Triduum, "It behooves us to glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom is our salvation, life and resurrection, by whom we are saved and delivered" (Gal. 6/14).

Holy Thursday is the anniversary of the Lord's Supper when Jesus ate the Passover meal with his apostles. It was then that he instituted the Eucharist, which is Sacrament, Sacrifice and Memorial. He commanded his first priests to repeat this action as a Memorial to him. It was also then that he washed their feet and gave us an example and command of brotherly love.

Unselfish love is the theme of this day. It should contain works of mercy, care and concern in response to Christ's words, "I give you a new commandment: 'Love one another' (Jn. 13/34).

events, but rather together comprise the one redeeming action of Christ. Many centuries ago St. Augustine wrote that these last three days of Holy Week are not a preparation for Easter, but rather are the most sacred Easter Triduum of the crucified, buried and risen Savior.

Jesus spoke in this fashion to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, when he said, "Did not the Messiah have to undergo all this (suffering) so as to enter into his glory?" (Lk. 24/26). The preaching of Peter as given in the first reading of the Easter Sunday Mass also can be seen as a definition of Easter: "They killed him, finally, hanging him on a tree, only to have God raise him up on the third day" (Acts 10/40).

In keeping with the most ancient tradition of the Church, we believe that the Easter action of the Lord embraced three days during which mankind was restored to friendship with the Father. On Easter Sunday and through the week we repeat in the liturgy, "Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. Let us celebrate the feast . . . with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5/7-8). This traditional refrain reminds us that Easter means not only the resurrection but also the passion, death and burial of Jesus.

This belief in the message and meaning of Easter is emphasized in every Mass. It is most explicit in the Memorial Acclamation,

"Lord, by your cross and resurrection you have set us free. You are the Savior of the world."

EVENING MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Easter Triduum begins with the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper. Its Entrance Antiphon emphasizes the theme

One feature of this Mass is the (optional) re-enactment of the Gospel narrative of the washing of the feet. We are dramatically reminded that Christian life means humble service.

The first reading of the Mass from the Book of Exodus tells of the first Passover. It included a sacrifice and a meal as a memorial to God's love for his Chosen People. The second reading recalls that after our Lord celebrated the ancient Passover, he established a new covenant in his blood, a sacrifice, sacrament and memorial with the new People of God. What more fitting occasion is there than this evening to participate in the liturgy and receive the Sacrament instituted by our Lord!

Holy Communion is received from hosts freshly consecrated at this Mass. The bishop can permit all to receive the Eucharist under both forms of bread and wine. "Communion under both kinds is the more perfect sacramental expression of the people's participation in the Eucharist" (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, n. 240).

After Communion, the remaining hosts are transferred to the repository, which in many updated churches is the normal place for reservation. In the spirit of Holy Week, the repository is decorated very simply. Adoration continues until late in the evening, but after midnight there is no solemn adoration.

The altar of sacrifice is stripped in silence and the crucifix covered or removed from the sanctuary. Mass will not be offered again until the Easter Vigil Service. We depart strengthened in our belief that,

"When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim your death, Lord Jesus, until you come in glory."

CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S PASSION

Today the Church celebrates the passion and death of her Lord. Since Palm Sunday the shadow of the cross has been cast across every liturgy. Today the cross is the symbol which completely dominates our liturgy.

The celebrant wears red Mass vestments to honor the Lamb whose blood saves us. A prayer recalling our redemption begins the ceremony. The first reading from Isaiah describes the Suffering Servant. The second reading from Hebrews recalls that Jesus submitted humbly and became for all a source of eternal salvation. The Passion according to John is proclaimed. After the homily, we pray for all mankind in an ancient form of the General Intercessions. All of these petitions may be

Paschal fast and abstinence of Good Friday should be maintained through Holy Saturday until the Easter Vigil Service.

NIGHT WATCH OF THE RESURRECTION

The Church tarries today at the Lord's tomb, meditating on his passion and death. She refrains from all ceremony until nightfall. During the night-watch (Vigil Service) sorrow and mourning give way to joy and celebration.

The Easter Vigil Service is the 'high point' of the entire liturgical year. Easter is the "Solemnity of solemnities," and this most ancient vigil is the "Mother of all holy vigils."

Though the new order for the Vigil Service is shorter than in past years, the recent modifications and simplifications have made the meaning of this holy

prayed, or a selection may be made from them.

Christians of earlier centuries venerated the true cross. Yet every image of the cross visibly brings to mind him who suffered and died for us. The liturgy reaches its high point in the arrival of the crucifix. If unveiled, it is carried from the main entrance to the sanctuary. If veiled, it is presented to the celebrant, who unveils it. In either case, three times he proclaims, "Behold the wood of the Cross on which has hung the salvation of the world." Each time we kneel and respond, "Come let us adore."

The cross is venerated. The celebrant and (some of) the congregation genuflect before it or kiss it as a sign of sorrow and gratitude. If many are present, the cross will be raised before all. At the end of this veneration, the cross is placed at the altar of sacrifice.

The third and final part of the liturgy is the Communion Service. No Mass is offered this day, but Christians commemorate the supreme sacrifice of Jesus by receiving Holy Communion from the hosts consecrated yesterday.

After Communion the ceremony ends with a Prayer over the People, similar to the dismissal blessing at Mass. It reminds us that we find our hope in the resurrection. The altar is stripped at a convenient time, without ceremony, but the unveiled cross remains at the altar.

For Christians, these waning hours of Friday and all of Saturday are a time of transition from the Lenten observance of prayer and penance into anticipation of joy in the resurrection of Jesus. The official documents even suggest that the obligatory

night shine forth more clearly.

A large fire is kindled and blessed outside the church where all are gathered. When the Easter Candle is lit from this fire, it symbolizes Christ the Light of the world, and it dispels the darkness of the night. Christ is our "pillar of fire," leading us, the new Israel. The Paschal Candle provides the light for the Easter Proclamation which recalls the grandeur of Jesus' rising on this holy night. Its text recounts God's wonderful works in the Old Testament, foreshadowing his wonders accomplished in the New Testament.

Through the readings we are disposed to receive the sacraments with deeper faith. In imitation of the death and resurrection of the Lord, Baptism may be celebrated after the Gospel has proclaimed his resurrection. Baptismal water is blessed from which the catechumens, buried with Christ by death to sin, emerge into the new life of his grace. "If we have been united with him through likeness to his death, so shall we be through a like resurrection" (Rom. 6/5).

We renew our Baptismal Promises and pledge to witness by our lives and conduct to the new life bestowed on us in Baptism. Then the liturgy continues with the General Intercessions and the usual order of Mass follows, omitting Lauds at the end.

Those who participate in the Vigil Mass may receive Communion again at the second (morning) Mass of Easter Sunday. At the Vigil Mass, the bishop can permit all to receive Communion of both host and cup. At least all the newly baptized and their godparents receive both without any permission.

AN INSIDE LOOK

Nostalgia Rescued Tony Awards for Costa	2B
Snow-Blind Friend is Praised	4B
Nazareth Academy Nears Century Mark	7B