

Lent... A Season of Hope

Insights in Liturgy

By Paul Oliver and Pam Schaeffer

Looking Forward to Easter Vigil

Easter is the culmination of the Liturgical Year in the same way that Sunday crowns the week. The Easter Vigil service is the high point of the Easter Triduum. While watching and waiting as faithful servants for our master's return, we celebrate and enter into His death and resurrection in the Sacraments of Initiation and recognize Him in the breaking of bread and sharing of wine.

Thus Easter is the one celebration that the parish Liturgy Committee should

take great time and effort in planning. A number of aspects of the service need attention, among them are: setting, environment, hospitality and use of good symbols.

The setting of the Easter Vigil is of the utmost importance if we are to be reminded of the meaning of vigil and enter into the spirit of the resurrection. It should be, first of all, a vigil, which is a night watch, a waiting. "The entire celebration of this vigil should take place at night, beginning after nightfall and ending with dawn." (Section 21, General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar). The Vigil, then, should start late at night or more preferably

early in the morning to end at dawn. Under no condition should the service begin before nightfall. This would take away all meaning of the Vigil and reduce it to another ordinary anticipatory Mass. Remember that since this is the Easter Vigil Liturgy, there can be no earlier Masses.

The church should reflect the mood of Easter's joy and hope in its environment. Two basic ingredients for this are light and color.

Lighting can be used to create the tone of a service. The Vigil Service is one of waiting in the dark; the Paschal Candle brings us out of darkness into His light. Therefore, the church

should be completely dark for the beginning of the service. (For the safety of the people, a minimum of lights should be used, perhaps over each doorway). Darkness enhances the Procession of Light. The Paschal Candle should provide enough light for the singing of the Exsultet. Immediately after the Exsultet, the church should be fully lit.

The use of color to enhance the celebration of the Vigil can be effective, especially when used in a simple, dramatic way. Too often the only use of color has been in the use of banners with explanatory phrases. When banners assist in creating a mood they can be quite helpful. When they are used to communicate a theme, however, they often distract us from the rich symbols of our tradition. Banners should enhance these symbols without words, e.g. with vibrant color, symbolic forms (candle, water, etc.). The texture, form and colors should alone enrich the visual context of the liturgy.

The atmosphere of a church bursting with light and exploding with colors in banners and flowers after the singing of the Easter Proclamation cannot but stir the hearts of the people with

feelings of joy and hope.

If a person is not comfortable in church, all the planning in the world will not help that person truly partake in the celebration. Here are a few points to consider in the area of hospitality. (Something that should concern us during the rest of the year also!) What other function do we attend where we keep our coats on for the entire time, as if ready to leave at a moment's notice? There should be a coat rack provided as the people enter. For the Procession of Light there should be enough greeters (ushers) to handle the distribution of candles. These greeters can also assist in helping people remove coats. If there are programs, greeters can assist in passing them out. The most important thing is that these greeters are to extend to everyone a warm welcome, to make people feel wanted and comfortable.

Two major symbols used during the celebration of the Vigil are fire and water. The new fire should be lit outside if at all possible, so that there may be a procession into church. This fire should be of substantial proportions, visible to all. After the procession the Paschal Candle should be placed in a prominent place within the

sanctuary. This may be beside the lectern so that the deacon or cantor may use its light to proclaim the Exsultet, or in front of the altar. The Paschal Candle should remain in this prominent position and be lit for each celebration for the entire Easter Season.

Whether the baptismal font or other suitable vessel (c.g. a large crystal punch bowl) is employed, it should be placed so that all can see the various ceremonies. This way the importance of the symbolism of water becomes apparent. If there are candidates for Baptism, a large enough area should be provided for the participants to gather her without blocking the view of the congregation. This might be inside the sanctuary on the opposite side from the candle, or at the front of the center aisle.

The elements that are used for celebrating the Eucharist are also important symbols. The bread should be real unleavened bread baked in a large loaf so that it may be broken by the celebrant and ministers of communion and distributed to the people.

The use of good symbols and some thought as to their placement can only enhance the people's celebration.

St. Francis, Auburn

Stations of the Cross Still Hold Great Meaning

Ten parishioners from St. Francis of Assisi parish in Auburn were asked to select the Station of the Cross that held the most meaning for them.

Their replies indicate that the Stations are as important and meaningful now as they ever were.

Mildred Egan chose the third station, when Jesus falls for the first time. "It is so sad, but it reminds me that Christ is with us when we stumble in life."

Darlene DeRosa selected Station number five: Simon helps Jesus carry the cross. "It is consoling to know there was someone there to help Him," she said.

Dora LaFratta chose the eleventh station: Jesus is crucified. "When I reflect on this station, it is hard to understand how someone would ever do this to another person."

The sixth station was the choice of Louise Burns. "When Veronica wipes away the blood and sweat from Christ's face. It is good to know that someone showed compassion toward our Lord, as He had shown to others."

Rose Pacelli selected the fourteenth station because "it is the climax of our Lord's passion. He died for our sins."

Philip Simone said that the fifth station, where Jesus is condemned to death for the sins of mankind, is the most significant. He said "it makes me think about how he forgave us and tells us to love one another."

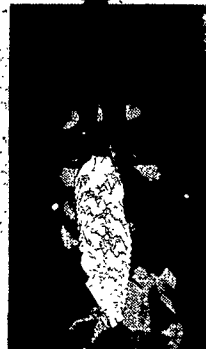
Rudy Scuderi explained that all the stations of the cross are meaningful. "To me it is one continuous story of an event in salvation."



Mildred Egan



Darlene DeRosa



Dora LaFratta



Louise Burns



Rose Pacelli



Philip Simone



Rudy Scuderi



Jeanne Balk



Carmella Tozzi

Jeanne Balk chose the sixth station, where Veronica wipes the face of Jesus because it "makes me want to be more charitable too."

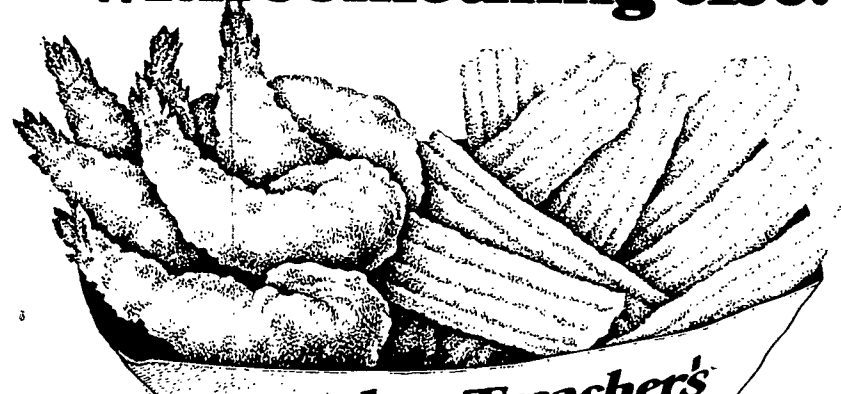
Carmella Tozzi also selected the sixth station, because "it reminds me of the image of the face on the cloth and its face of suffering."



Paul Guido

Paul Guido chose station number twelve where Jesus dies as the most meaningful. "It means redemption," he said.

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