



# NewsLetter

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## **Eighteen Questions on the Paschal Triduum**

*Each year, the Secretariat of Divine Worship receives many e-mails and phone calls concerning preparations for the celebration of the Paschal Triduum. The following eighteen questions, which appeared in a revised form on the Secretariat's website in March 2009, address some of the most commonly received questions, and may be freely reproduced by diocesan Offices for Worship, parish Liturgy Committees, and others seeking to promote the effective celebration of these most sacred days.*

### **1. When does the Triduum begin and end?**

The Easter Triduum begins with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, reaches its high point in the Easter Vigil, and closes with Evening Prayer on Easter Sunday.

### **2. May another Mass besides the Mass of the Lord's Supper be celebrated on Holy Thursday?**

Ordinarily, no other Mass may be celebrated on Holy Thursday. However, by way of exception, the local Ordinary may permit another Mass in churches and oratories to be celebrated in the evening, and, in the case of genuine necessity, even in the morning. Such Masses are provided for those who in no way are able to participate in the evening Mass.

### **3. How are the Holy Oils, consecrated and blessed at the Chrism Mass, to be received in the parish?**

A reception of the oils may take place at the Mass of the Lord's Supper. The oils, in suitable vessels, are carried in the procession of the gifts, before the bread and wine by members of the assembly. A text for this can be found in the 2004 *Sacramentary Supplement* published by Catholic Book Publishing Company, or it is available at [www.USCCB.org/liturgy/holyoils.shtml](http://www.USCCB.org/liturgy/holyoils.shtml).

### **4. Is the *Mandatum*, the washing of feet at the Mass of the Lord's Supper, required?**

No. The *Roman Missal* only indicates, "Depending on pastoral circumstances [*ubi ratio pastoralis id suadeat*], the washing of feet follows the homily."

### **5. When should the Good Friday Celebration of the Lord's Passion take place?**

Normally it should take place in the afternoon, at about 3:00 PM, to enable people to assemble more easily. However, pastoral discretion may indicate a time shortly after midday, or in the late evening, though never later than 9:00 PM. Depending on the size or nature of a parish or other community, the local Ordinary may permit the service to be repeated.

### **6. May a deacon officiate at the Celebration of the Lord's Passion?**

The *Roman Missal* does not envision the possibility that a deacon could officiate at the Celebration of the Lord's Passion, even though it appears that the celebration appears to be a service of the Word with the distribution of Holy Communion. Historically, even though the

Eucharist is not celebrated on this day, the liturgy of Good Friday bears resemblance to a Mass. At one time it was called the “Mass of the Presanctified” (referring to the pre-consecrated hosts used at Communion, even when only the priest received Communion). This is also reflected in the prescribed vesture for the priest: stole and chasuble. The liturgy of Good Friday, as an integral part of the Triduum, is linked to the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord’s Supper and the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday. While there may be cases where a parish with multiple churches or chapels (*e.g.*, mission churches or a cluster of parishes under one pastor) might rotate the liturgies among the various locations, it would not be appropriate for a community to celebrate only part of the Triduum.

### **7. May any of the readings at the Celebration of the Lord’s Passion be omitted?**

The *Lectionary for Mass* does not indicate that any readings may be omitted at the Celebration of the Lord’s Passion. All three readings (Isaiah, Hebrews, and the Passion according to John) are required. It should be noted, however, for Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion, the *Lectionary* indicates that while all three readings provided should be used, there may be circumstances in which one or more of the readings at Mass could be omitted: “Given, however, the importance of the account of the Lord’s Passion, the priest, having in mind the character of each individual congregation, is authorized to choose only one of the two readings prescribed before the Gospel, or if necessary, he may read only the account of the Passion, even in the shorter form. This permission applies, however, only to Masses celebrated with a congregation.” Thus, the account of the Passion is never omitted.

### **8. Does the Church encourage any other liturgical celebrations on Good Friday?**

On this day the Office of Readings and Morning Prayer could appropriately be celebrated with the participation of the people in the churches. Note that Evening Prayer is only prayed by those who do not participate in the Celebration of the Lord’s Passion.

### **9. Do devotions have a particular importance on Good Friday?**

The *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* (2002) provides the proper perspective in paragraphs 142-145. Clearly the central celebration of this day is the Good Friday Celebration of the Lord’s Passion. In no way should manifestations of popular piety, either by the time or manner in which they are convoked, substitute for this solemn liturgical action. Nor should aspects of the various acts of piety be mixed with the Good Friday celebration, creating a hybrid. In recent times, Passion processions, celebrations of the Stations of the Cross, and Passion Plays have become more common. In such representations, actors and spectators can be involved in a moment of faith and genuine piety. Care should be taken, however, to point out to the faithful that a Passion Play is a representation which is commemorative and they are very different from “liturgical actions” which are *anamnesis*, or the mysterious presence of the redemptive event of the Passion.

### **10. How does the Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday begin?**

The Veneration of the Cross begins with one of two forms of the Showing of the Cross. The First Form begins as the deacon or another suitable minister goes to the sacristy and obtains the veiled Cross. Accompanied by two ministers with lighted candles, the veiled Cross is brought to the center of the sanctuary in procession. The priest accepts the Cross and then, standing in front of the altar and facing the people, uncovers the upper part of the Cross, the right arm, and then the entire Cross. Each time he unveils a part of the Cross, he sings *This is the wood of the Cross*. In the Second Form of the Showing of the Cross, the priest or deacon goes to the church door, where he takes up the uncovered Cross. Accompanied by two ministers with lighted candles, he processes to the sanctuary, stopping at the door of the church, in the middle of the church, and before entering the sanctuary, to sing the acclamation, *This is the wood of the Cross*.

### **11. How is the cross venerated by members of the congregation on Good Friday?**

After the showing of the Cross, the priest or deacon may carry the Cross to the entrance of the sanctuary or another suitable place. The first person to adore the Cross is the priest celebrant. If circumstances suggest, he takes off his chasuble and his shoes. The clergy, lay ministers, and the faithful then approach the Cross. The personal adoration of the Cross is an important feature in this celebration and every effort should be made to achieve it. The rubrics remind us that “only one Cross” should be used for adoration. 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 it and stand in the center 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. It should also 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. Coordination with ushers and planning the flow of people beforehand can allow for this part of the liturgy to be celebrated with decorum and devotion.

## **12. When should the Easter Vigil take place?**

The Vigil, by its very nature, must take place at night. It is not begun before nightfall and should end before daybreak on Easter Sunday. The celebration of the Easter Vigil takes the place of the Office of Readings of Easter Sunday. The Easter Vigil begins and ends in darkness. It is a *nocturnal vigil*, retaining its ancient character of vigilance and expectation, as the Christian people await the Resurrection of the Lord during the night. Fire is blessed and the paschal candle is lighted to illumine the night so that all may hear the Easter proclamation and listen to the word of God proclaimed in the Scriptures. For this reason the Service of Light (*Lucernarium*) takes place before the Liturgy of the Word. Since sunset varies at different locations throughout the country, local weather stations can be consulted as to the time of sunset in the area, keeping in mind that twilight concludes (*i.e.*, nightfall occurs) somewhat later.

## **13. What considerations should be given for the paschal candle used at the Easter Vigil?**

This candle should be made of wax, never be artificial, be replaced 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 paschal candle is the symbol of the *light of Christ, rising in glory*, scattering the darkness of our hearts and minds. Above all, the paschal candle should be a genuine candle, the pre-eminent symbol of the light of Christ. Choice of size, design, and color should be made in relationship to the sanctuary in which it will be placed.

## **14. In the case of mission churches and cluster parishes, can multiple paschal candles be used for the Service of Light?**

The *Roman Missal*, not envisioning the pastoral situation of mission churches or cluster parishes, specifies that only one paschal candle is used. To accommodate the particular circumstances, the Secretariat might suggest that the candles from the mission churches or other parish churches could be present at the Easter Vigil, having been prepared in advance, and blessed alongside the main candle (perhaps having deacons or other representatives holding them). In keeping with the rubrics, for the lighting and procession only one candle should be lit (the principal one, or the one which will remain in that particular church). As the other candles in the congregation are lit, the other paschal candles could be lit and held (but not high, in order to maintain the prominence of the one principal candle) by someone at their place in the assembly. Once all the candles are extinguished after the singing of the *Exsultet*, the other paschal candles are put aside. On Easter Sunday morning, those candles could be taken to each of the missions and carried, lit, in the entrance procession at the first Mass at each church and put in place in the sanctuary.

## **15. How many readings should be proclaimed at 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 meets us once again on our journey and, “beginning with Moses and all the prophets” (Lk 24:27) opens up our minds and hearts, preparing 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. Meditation on these readings is so significant for this night that we are strongly urged to use all the readings whenever it can be done. Only in the case of grave pastoral circumstances can the number of readings be reduced. In such cases, at least three readings from the Old Testament should be read, always including Exodus 14.

## **16. How is the First Communion of the neophytes to be emphasized during the Easter Vigil?**

The celebrant, before he says, *This is the Lamb of God*, may make a brief remark to the neophytes about their first Communion and about the importance of so great a mystery, which is the climax of initiation and the center of the Christian life. This is a night when all should be able to receive Holy Communion under both forms.

## **17. What directions are given for the celebration of Masses on Easter Sunday?**

Mass is to be celebrated on Easter Day with great solemnity. A full complement of ministers and the use of liturgical music should be evident in all celebrations. In the dioceses of the United States, on Easter Sunday, the rite of the renewal of baptismal promises takes place after the homily, followed by the sprinkling with water blessed at the Vigil, during which the antiphon *Vidi aquam*, or some other song of baptismal character should be sung. (It should be noted that the Bishops of the United States have requested to retain this particular adaptation in the forthcoming third edition of the *Roman Missal*). The holy water fonts at the entrance to the church should also be filled with the same water. On the subsequent Sundays of the Easter season, it is appropriate that the Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling Holy Water take the place of the Act of Penitence (Penitential Rite).

## **18. Where is the paschal candle placed during the Easter season?**

The paschal candle has its proper place either by the ambo or by the altar and should be lit at least in all the more solemn liturgical celebrations of the season until Pentecost Sunday, whether at Mass, or at Morning and Evening Prayer. After the Easter season the candle should be kept with honor in the baptistery, so that in the celebration of Baptism the candles of the baptized may be lit from it. In the celebration of funerals the paschal candle should be placed near the coffin to indicate Christ's undying presence, his victory over sin and death, and the promise of sharing in Christ's victory by virtue of being part of the Body of Christ (see *Order of Christian Funerals*, no. 35). The paschal candle should not otherwise be lit nor placed in the sanctuary outside the Easter season.

*For more information on the various aspects of the Paschal Triduum, please visit the Secretariat's Lent and Easter resources website at [www.USCCB.org/liturgy/lenteaster.shtml](http://www.USCCB.org/liturgy/lenteaster.shtml).*

## **January 2010 Meeting of the Vox Clara Committee**

The *Vox Clara* Committee met for the eighteenth time from January 26-29, 2010. This meeting was held at the Pontifical North American College in Rome. This Committee of senior Bishops from Episcopal Conferences throughout the English-speaking world was formed by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments on July 19, 2001 in order to provide advice to the Holy See concerning English-language liturgical books and to strengthen effective cooperation with the Conferences of Bishops in this regard.

The *Vox Clara* Committee is chaired by Cardinal George Pell, Sydney (Australia). The participants in the meeting were Archbishop Oscar Lipscomb, Emeritus Mobile (USA), who serves as First Vice-Chairman; Cardinal Justin Rigali, Philadelphia (USA), who serves as Treasurer; Cardinal Oswald Gracias, Bombay (India), who serves as Second Vice-Chairman; Archbishop Alfred Hughes, Emeritus New Orleans (USA); Archbishop Terrence Prendergast, S.J., Ottawa (Canada); Archbishop Peter Kwasi Sarpong, Emeritus Kumasi (Ghana); Archbishop Kelvin Felix, Emeritus Castries (Saint Lucia), and Bishop Philip Boyce, O.C.D., Raphoe (Ireland). Other members of the Committee, though not present at this meeting, are Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, Emeritus Westminster (England), who serves as Secretary and Cardinal Francis George, O.M.I., Chicago (USA).

The members were assisted in their work by the following advisors: Reverend Jeremy Driscoll, O.S.B. (USA), Reverend Dennis McManus (USA), Monsignor Gerard McKay and Abbot Cuthbert Johnson, O.S.B. (England), and Monsignor James P. Moroney (USA), Executive Secretary. Monsignor Robert K. Johnson (USA) provided technical support. The customary assistance of officials of the Congregation, led by Reverend Anthony Ward, S.M., Undersecretary, was also appreciated.

The Committee began its work with a review of two White Book translations of the *Missale Romanum, editio typica tertia*, recently approved by the Conferences of Bishops. Following their discussion of the ICEL renderings of the *Proper of Saints* and the *Common of Saints*, the Committee submitted its recommendations to the Congregation for consideration before the Congregation acts on the definitive confirmation of these texts.

The members also reviewed various reports on the steps being taken for editing, coordination of manuscripts, and reviews for internal consistency of the English-language translation of the *Missale Romanum, editio typica tertia* being carried out by the Congregation.

Reports were also heard by the Committee on various initiatives underway for the effective introduction of the new English-language edition of the *Roman Missal*. Expressing their enthusiasm for the extraordinary pastoral opportunity provided by the publication of a translation characterized by such high literary quality, theological precision, and pastoral utility, the members emphasized the importance of providing pastors and people with the greatest possible support in the effective pastoral reception of this new translation.

Finally, the Committee welcomed Cardinal Antonio Cañizares Llovera, Prefect of the Congregation. Cardinal Pell expressed his appreciation for the presence and support of His Eminence and presented the members and advisors of the Committee to him. The Cardinal Prefect responded by thanking the members of the Congregation staff and the members and advisors of *Vox Clara* for their work on the English-language translation of the *Missale Romanum*. He also expressed his hope that the coming confirmation of the *Roman Missal* would prove to be of great pastoral advantage to the Church in the English-speaking world.