

THE PASCHAL TRIDUUM

This is the connection between the Paschal Mystery and the liturgy, which is the Church's official, public, communal prayer. The three-day celebration is the heart of the liturgical year, and a special gift to be treasured.

The Lord's Day and the Liturgical Year: the most fundamental and foundational holy day. The **Liturgical Year** = the annual cycle of religious feasts and seasons that bring the context for the Church's worship. We remember and celebrate God the Father's saving plan as revealed through the life of his Son Jesus. Christ plays a central role, because he not only gave us the sacred liturgy but also makes himself present through the liturgy which then becomes sacrament.

The Liturgy is not just a celebration of past events. The Holy Spirit through his transforming power, makes the **Paschal Mystery real and active** in the liturgy, bringing us into deeper communion with Christ and with one another. **The sacred Liturgy is Trinitarian**. We worship The Father, source of all blessings of creation and salvation. The Son plays a central role, making himself present through the Liturgy. The Holy Spirit prepares us to receive Christ and reveals his presence in the community, the Scriptures, the physical signs of liturgical celebrations.

The Significance of the Triduum – the three holy days that are at the centre of the Church's liturgical year. They are unique in their celebration, filled with special signs and symbolic actions. These help us to meditate on the wonders of God's saving plan, culminating in the Paschal Mystery. Think of this time as a personal retreat.

HOLY THURSDAY begins in the evening, with the **CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER** and concludes with keeping watch with Jesus, in the final night of his earthly ministry.

The liturgy contains wealth of themes:

- Original Passover of Jesus and his disciples
- Washing of the feet
- Institution of the Eucharist
- Institution of the Sacred Priesthood
- Betrayal of Judas
- Gethsemane experience.

Passover Meal: a thanksgiving sacrifice during which Israelites recalled:

- being led out of the slavery of Egypt
- a family meal, when the youngest member enquires
- a day of remembrance for you
- a day of festival
- a meal eaten with unleavened bread
- girdle, sandals, staff in hand, eaten hastily.

Institution of the Eucharist: Jn does not narrate the event but dedicates 5 out of 21 chapters to Final Discourse (13-17) that includes the Priestly Prayer. All Synoptics narrate in detail. Jn mentions it took place "before the Feast of the Passover" – in the evening of this day, the Paschal Lambs were slaughtered. At sundown the new day was beginning. Paul's account is the oldest (56 AD), and received from the early community. It is now, no more the Passover Meal, but something new. With the Eucharist, the Church itself was established, bound together and made into a community. This becomes the most important act of the Church.

Institution of the Priesthood: “Do this in memory of Me”. A definite liturgical form of the Eucharist would evolve in the life of the Church – from the “breaking of the bread” to the Mass. Christ’s priesthood shared with the Apostles will be handed down to their successors, till the end of time. The Mass of Chrism [may be held on an earlier day]. All the priests of the diocese, gather around their Bishop and renew the vows of their priesthood. The Holy Oils are blessed and given to every parish. They will signify the link with the Bishop, in the celebration of the sacraments throughout the year.

Washing of the feet An atmosphere of farewell – not an individual act but signifies the whole saving ministry – no table fellowship without being cleansed. Mandatum = a new commandment. “...as I have done for you, you should also do” Jn13:15.

Betrayal of Judas and Denial of Peter Both are prewarned. Judas betrays his friendship with Jesus and the trust placed in him [the finances]. Greed leads him to fall into the grip of another power, 30 pieces of silver= \$20. Jesus addresses him as “Friend...” He is able to tell the chief priests “I have sinned” but the second tragedy: he can no longer believe in forgiveness. His remorse turns to despair. Peter on the other hand is able to respond to the glance of Jesus and weeps b bitterly. Later on, “Do you love me?”

Gethsemane Here Jesus experiences his final loneliness. Here the weight of sin and evil penetrated his soul. Here he was kissed by a betrayer. Here he was abandoned by all his disciples. Jn uses the very specific term “garden” = the garden of Eden and the Fall – the betrayal of traitor – the place of the Resurrection.

Liturgy of the Word:

Exodus 12,1-8,11-14: Moses shows Pharaoh through miracles, God sent him to set Israelites free. It unfolds the story of the Passover Meal and the Lord’s command to celebrate it year after year.

1Cor 11,23-26: Paul gives us the narrative of the Institution of the Eucharist, even before the Gospels were eventually written.

Jn 13, 1-15: John writes his gospel 50 years after the Last Supper, when the Synoptics had already written about the Eucharist and the Christians were celebrating it. He was keen to tell us what happened at that gathering. He dedicates five out of twenty-one chapters to the Final Discourse and the Priestly Prayer Ch13-17. The central point of Jesus’ teaching on this night was his **MANDATUM** – new commandment. “Love one another as I have loved you.”

The Altar of Repose = on the side of the Church, well decorated, where the celebrant in procession brings, Jesus in the Bl. Sacrament. This is not an Exposition and Benediction Rite; but Jesus getting up from the table and going with his disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane. The time there should be spent not in Adoration, but in contemplating Jesus in his agony and in the hands of his enemies.

Our prayer is reading, meditating on the passages of the Gospels that speak of the agony, with appropriate prayers and hymns that assist us to respond to Jesus’ plea: “Could you not watch one hour with me...”

After time spent with Jesus, as we return home, all through the night our thoughts are with Jesus being, mocked, crowned, insulted and scourged, while his apostles have all run away out of fear.

According to the Jewish understanding of the day, it ended with the sun going down. So, we are already early on Good Friday.

CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S PASSION [Good Friday] We know that Jesus died 2000 years ago and cannot suffer or die again. But while he was dying, he thought of each one of us. He had clearly in mind every single sin committed till the end of time. Jesus shed his blood for our sins, and paid in advance for our faults. In a way he is dying for us today. He is washing us of all our sins with his precious blood. Good Friday is a day of sadness and a day of hope.

The Liturgical Celebration: [at about 3.00 pm]

The Church presents a stark picture: no decorations, no holy water at the entrance. The altar is completely bare – no altar cloths, candles, flowers. The crucifix is kept away and covered till the Unveiling.

- ❖ The service has four parts:
- ❖ Listening to the Word of God
- ❖ Prayers for various people
- ❖ Veneration of the Cross
- ❖ Communion Service

The priests enter in silence and fall prostrate to express SHAME and SORROW for our sins in front of God. As those who killed his Son--- not the Jews.

How could **Isaiah** 52:13-53, 12 write about Jesus hundreds of years earlier? * pierced through for our faults; *crushed for our sins; *like a lamb led to the slaughter; *wounded for our transgressions; *he opened not his mouth*.

In the **Letter to the Hebrews**, a disciple of the Apostles explains to his people *Jesus suffered more than any of us has or will suffer; *Jesus tempted as we are, though without sin; *because of Jesus we shall not be afraid to seek mercy and grace.

The **Passion according to John**. From Hosanna to crucify him. Jesus' first word "Father forgive them..." Jesus does not leave his mother alone, gives her to John and to us. Blood and water flowed from his side, the fount of the sacraments for the Church.

Intercessions We have listened to all Jesus had to suffer to save us, and we realize our unworthiness and dependency of God's unconditional love. Yet we have the courage to bring to his throne all the people, so that abundant mercy through Jesus reaches the whole world. The intercessions are longer, more formal, prayed by the priest.

Veneration of the Cross The priest brings up the cross in solemn procession. Three times he lifts it up and uncovers a part singing: This is the wood of the cross, on which hung the Saviour of the world. " *not a piece of wood; * not a lifeless statue!

3 reasons for veneration:

1. A profession of faith: I believe Jesus died on a Cross for me;
2. Expression of gratitude for Jesus' supreme sacrifice
3. Promise to avoid sin again.

Venerate = showing great appreciation

Holy Communion sharing the broken body and blood on the Cross. A commemoration of the Passion, Death and promise of resurrection.

The service ends as it began in silence, we go away mourning as after a funeral of a loved one.

THE EASTER VIGIL [Holy Saturday] **Vigil** means Watch. In the army sentries watch over the camp; guards watch over the village against enemies. Early Christians kept watch all night, singing hymns and prayers, reading the Scriptures, a watch of longing for the dawn, as they waited for the coming of the Christ.

Christians took the name and date of this feast from the Passover feast of the Jews. For many years, Easter was the first and only feast for the early Christians. The sadness of the Passion has passed and we anticipate the celebration of Christ's victory over sin and death.

The service has four parts:

- 1 The service of light and the Exultet
- 2 Listening to the Word of God
- 3 Blessing of the Water; Baptism
- 4 The Eucharist.

The Easter Vigil service begins in darkness outside the church. A fire is lit. The fire is blessed and the Easter Candle is lit. The light of Christ has broken through the darkness of sin and death.

- 1) Fire gives us light and warmth. All the 'artificial' lights are put off. Christ gives us light and life. This was not destroyed by the cross. **The Paschal candle** is lit from the fire. It represents Jesus Christ, who was in the tomb without life, after his death. But now he comes out, both as God and man. There are markings on the candle. **Alpha and Omega** are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, the language commonly used for worship in the early Church. Christ is the beginning and end of all time. The **five grains** are put on the candle to represent the five wounds made by the nails, on his hands, feet and side. After his resurrection. Jesus showed the wounds to his apostles. A procession starts with the invocation **Christ the Light**. Three times it stops; as the light of Christ begins to spread to everyone and everywhere.

The **PASCHAL CANDLE** is then placed on a prominent stand and the **EASTER PROCLAMATION** is solemnly pronounced. It is a most ancient hymn. Addressed to the candle that represents Christ, it is "a rejoicing because darkness vanishes; and a shining splendour is radiant." All hold lighted candles.

- 2) **Reading of the Scriptures** There is a choice of seven readings from the Old Testament, most referring to an overview of salvation history and Baptism; and two from the New Testament. *As per the New Roman Missal "At least three readings should be read from the OT, both from the law and the prophets, and their respective responsorial Psalms sung"*. The third one from Exodus is not left out. After each reading there is a responsorial psalm and a prayer: 1) a new creation; 2) a new covenant; 3) breaking with past of slavery; 4) reconciliation with God; 5) a sharing of God's gifts; 6) an undertaking to observe God's law; 7) God cleanses from sin and gives us his Spirit.

Until now, the altar was not dressed or decorated with flowers. Now that the Old Testament has been replaced, we sing the **Gloria**, bring out the flowers, ring the bells, and introduce a festive tone. The celebration of the Resurrection has begun. **Paul** reminds us that if we "believe that we die with Christ, we shall also rise with him to a new life." – The meaning of our Baptism. Then there is the reading of the Gospel. All three Synoptics mention the women going to the tomb, and finding the stone rolled away and Jesus not there. He is risen.

- 3) **Baptism and Renewal of Baptismal Promises**. A large vessel filled with water is brought, and now blessed, with a long prayer that recalls references to water in the Scriptures. Adult Baptisms of those who have gone through a year's programme of the RCIA, then takes place.

The congregation lights their candles; and prepare for the Renewal of their Baptismal Promises. This also takes the place of the Creed, and is followed by the Prayer of the Faithful.

- 4) From here on, **the Eucharist** continues as usual, right to the end.

[Easter eggs, chicks and bunnies, are associated with Easter because they are a sign of spring and of new life.]

Archdiocesan Liturgy Committee