GOOD LITURGY MAKES DEMANDS

Father Bill Burke
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Once, in a homily on spiritual freedom, I quoted a line from “To Althea From Prison” by Richard Lovelace: “Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage.” As people were leaving, a young man just recently released from prison came up to me and engaged me in a lively discussion about his own spiritual journey and liberation from past hurts and failures. In the course of this conversation, he humorously said that although stone walls do not a prison make, they were definitely a good start. Actually, his exact words were much more colourful, but you get the point.

Liturgists are sometimes criticized for getting too passionate about the “externals” of liturgy and the integral importance of full and rich symbols in our celebrations. To be fair this criticism has in some cases been occasioned by people involved in liturgical preparations who do not themselves have a deep understanding of the depth of the symbolic language of the liturgy, and who then give undue importance to secondary things. The fact remains, however, that the reforms of Vatican II call us to greater care about how we enact this symbolic language in our celebrations. The revised *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* is replete with references to the importance of gestures, objects, silence, style, manner of performing all the ministries, music, space, beauty, dignity, etc. It calls us to much more than a legalistic minimalism. This rubricist mentality, while satisfying the requirements of validity, may seriously reduce the authenticity of our celebrations; authenticity in ritual is crucial. Over a long period of time, this tendency to minimalism robbed a rich liturgical tradition of its robust fullness. Deep immersion fonts for baptism were drained and replaced by gold-plated imitation oyster shells containing a few drops of water. Chrism was no longer poured over the head; instead, a barely visible smudge from a lightly greased cotton swab now suffices, and even that has to be wiped away by a clean swab. The “pillar of fire” of the *Exultet* is often a four-year-old paschal candle that barely lifts its head above the rim of the stand or worse, a hard resin version with a distracting flickering bulb powered by a battery. And we still struggle to convince people, including many clergy, of the importance of communion from the cup (see *GIRM* #281)

Much of this is justified by the North American “heresy” of convenience. A wedding dance or overtime in the Stanley Cup Playoffs will carry us through the midnight hour, but not the Solemn Easter
Vigil. Good ritual makes serious demands on us, but its gifts are beyond measure.

In this newsletter, we include the second instalment of the reflection on “Mystagogy and the Catholic Deaf Community” by Matthew Hysell. This article has much rich thought on the symbolic language of liturgy. The second article, “Holy Week – a Lamp Under a Basket” by Dr. Glenn Byer, offers a good long-term plan to revitalize the Triduum.

Will a late night vigil and a roaring bonfire solidly entrench the reform of Vatican II? No, but as my recently released prisoner friend said in reference to stone walls and iron bars, they would definitely be a good start.

MYSTAGOGY IN THE CATHOLIC DEAF COMMUNITY
( Part II of II )

M. G. Hysell
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In Part I of this article, we looked at the meaning of ‘mystagogy’: it is catechesis that unpacks Catholic doctrine from liturgical and sacramental symbols. These symbols, however, are not restricted to the ‘matter’ of the sacraments, but also the accompanying gestures and words of the rite.¹

For deaf people, because they belong to a highly visual culture, the use of obvious and palpable symbols is imperative in order to facilitate a smooth mystagogy. What we wish to facilitate is that “Aha!-moment” that Bishop Gerald Wiesner, OMI so often speaks of, that moment when the believer understands what the symbols mean in hindsight.

In this second instalment, I would like to discuss three broad areas in which a sound mystagogy can be implemented in the Deaf Catholic community: a careful use of liturgical and sacramental symbols, art and environment in the worship space, and the use of iconography.

1. Liturgical and Sacramental Symbols

The sacred liturgy is, as we have said, fundamentally symbolic.² Liturgical use of water, olive oil, incense, bread, wine, fire, furniture, calendrical time, and gestures, affords a tangibility and sensuality of the liturgical celebration that allows for a certain ‘unpacking’ of its symbols to discover the content of faith. The overriding task of deaf

¹ As the Second Vatican Council teaches, “The liturgy, then, is rightly seen as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. It involves the presentation of humanity’s sanctification under the guise of signs perceptible by the senses and accomplished in ways appropriate to each of these signs.” See Sacrosanctum concilium, 7.

² A classic discussion on liturgical and sacramental symbols can be found in R. Guisdoni, Sacred Signs, trans. G. Baranham (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1979).
catechesis, therefore, is to develop the skills of an hermeneutic of liturgical and sacramental symbols.

However, one must differentiate between symbols and signs. A symbol is the physical artefact itself, such as the matter for the sacramental celebration or the chancel furniture. Water for baptism and the ambo for the lectionary are symbols that point to the sign or to the meaning of these symbols. In the case of water, it is a sign of cleansing, renewal, and life. In the case of the ambo, it is a sign of the sturdiness of the word of God. It is precisely in moving beyond the symbols to their respective signs that constitutes the moment of mystagogy. Conversely, with only a minimal use of the symbols, the effectiveness of the mystagogy is likewise minimized since the continuum between ‘symbol’ and ‘sign’ is disrupted.

Imagine a catechist who prepares an encounter with the text of Romans 6.3-4 in which St. Paul wrote, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in the newness of life.” There is an obvious interplay of the ideas of going underwater in a drama of drowning and then emerging clean in a pool that alludes to the death of Christ. The rite of baptism, then, is a co-dying and corising with Christ; it is also a washing that physically manifests that our sins have been cleansed from our personal histories. The water indicates, moreover, that we have been given a renewed vigour. The symbol of water is intended to convey the sign of the sacramental grace of incorporation into the Easter event. In fact, the Congregation for Divine Worship decreed in 1973 that “Either the rite of immersion, which is more suitable as a symbol of the participation in the death and resurrection of Christ, or the rite of infusion may lawfully be used in the celebration of baptism.”

But let us suppose that an hypothetical neophyte was taught the above mystagogy; moreover, let us suppose that this neophyte received baptism by the infusion of a few drops of water on the forehead over a baptismal font resembling a birdbath. What ‘hindsight’ would our neophyte have that would inform the reception of mystagogy after having received a catechesis on baptism with Romans 6.3-4 in mind? Drops of water on the forehead can hardly

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4 I deliberately use the archaic spelling in order to reiterate its particular usage in phenomenology.
5 In fact, we might slightly rephrase St Augustine’s definition of a sacrament—“the visible sign of an invisible grace”—by substituting ‘symbol’ for ‘visible sign.’
6 Recall that this text is the Epistle reading for the Paschal Vigil immediately after the Great Doxology when lights are turned on and, under normal circumstances, bells are rung. Such a transition highlights the Good News and the transition from the world of sin and death to the world of redemption and eternal life.
7 Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen gentium (21 November 1964), n. 7; Dogmatic Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum concilium (4 December 1963), n. 6; cf. St Thomas Aquinas, S.Th., IIIa, q. 92, art. 5, ad 1; D. N. Bell, Cloud of Witnesses: An Introduction to the Development of Christian Doctrine to A.D. 500, new rev. ed. (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2007), 198.
serve as a symbol of co-burial with Christ or being washed clean from sin or newness of life. In this case, although we have a validly administered sacrament, we scarcely have the symbols that inform our perception of the signs. True, the neophyte received a ‘valid’ sacrament, but this was done with the loss of the symbols that were established by Christ to instruct the meaning of the sacraments. The neophyte’s mystagogy thus becomes impoverished, and grasp of the Catholic faith suffers a setback. The Neo-Scholastic mentality of obsessing over validity accounts only for the matter of the sacraments; it pays no attention to the symbolic import or, as St. Thomas Aquinas would say, the “signification” of the sacramental matter that has been established to instruct.

In the end, we have validity that bypasses symbols, that carries an impoverished signification and the meaning of the liturgical celebration loses that precious “Aha!-moment.” Mystagogy is lost to a rubric for a valid baptism: at least water running down the forehead and at least the intention to receive the sacrament. In the final analysis, the ‘at least’ rubric has become the ‘no more than’ rubric.

Such impoverished mystagogy is bad enough for Catholics who are hearing and who can absorb word-play. For deaf Catholics, on the other hand, communicating the word-play of “burial in the water” and the “burial with Christ” would only highlight all the more exactly what was missing from the full expression of the sacramental symbol, because the minimizing of the symbols has truncated the “sign-ness” of the sacramental celebration. The accompanying regret about the presider having employed only the ‘minimal requirements’ that were ‘good enough’ for the ‘valid’ celebration of the sacraments is enough to distract our neophyte from the crux of the mystery into which one may have been incorporated, because the focus would instead be on the dichotomy between symbol and sign. This hypothetical neophyte, baptized by infusion instead of experiencing tangible cleansing and purification from sin, now has to be told that the cleansing and purification have taken place. Catechesis is thus reduced to making up for what is missing in the neophyte’s hindsight of the sacramental reception. It is precisely this dichotomy that ought to be eliminated in the celebration of the sacraments if we are to have any hope for an effective and fruitful handing on of the faith in the Catholic Deaf community, especially since deaf culture is highly visual and sign language does not yet possess a written form.

Liturgical symbols that are not sacramental demand careful attention since deaf people tend to notice detail and nuance that is often missed by people who are more dependent on hearing. Such liturgical symbols include gestures made by the presider, especially when these are called for by the rubrics. During the Liturgy of the Eucharist, for example, three elevations are made with the chalice and paten: they are “slightly raised” at the Offertory, “shown to the

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8 Simply having ‘matter’ does not automatically guarantee that we have the accompanying ‘symbol.’ The two are not necessarily coextensive.

9 I have yet to hear of an argument, let alone a sound argument, that merely sacramental validity justifies limiting the symbolic meaning of the sacramental celebration.

10 Cf. Summa theologiae, IIIa, q.60, art.5.

11 Not only that, but signing this point would all the more drive home what didn’t happen.
people” at the Consecration, and at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer, the presider must be “lifting them up” above the head. 13

These ‘three elevations’ are intended to highlight the progression through the Eucharistic Prayer which reaches its high point at the Great Amen; by elevating the chalice and paten at the same height each time, the mystery of the Eucharist as anabasis or ‘ascent’ is lost.

Conversely, gratuitous ritual should be avoided. 14 By ‘gratuitous ritual’ I mean those actions which are not properly liturgical but are ‘ritual for ritual’s own sake’: this runs the risk of reducing the sacred liturgy to entertainment and is an occasion for distraction. By scraping away the barnacles of gratuitous ritual from the properly liturgical action, we highlight all the more the sacred moment taking place. 15 Since we are here discussing the Roman Liturgy, it is imperative that the Roman genius for austerity, noble simplicity, and frankness be retained.

2. ART AND ENVIRONMENT

The impoverishment of mystagogy in the Catholic Deaf community is restricted not only to the liturgical action, but also to the worship space and the use of ritual items such as the lectionary.

In many deaf parishes, it is common to use a lectionary that not only lacks recognitio and is also often photocopied and distributed to deputed lectors who often approach a music stand to read the text. What else can a deaf participant in the liturgy expect to conclude about the dignity and majesty of the word of God when the proclaimed text is read from a photocopied, folded sheet of paper on a moveable stand? 16 Holy Angels Parish in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles has set a better example by creating an ornamented leather binder with a version of the Scriptures bearing ecclesiastical approval. This same parish also has a gospel throne adjacent to the altar upon which a closed Evangelary sits until the proclamation of the gospel. After the proclamation, the Book remains open for all to see. While deaf language is pre-literary, it is nonetheless especially important that our sense of the biblical dimension of the liturgy not be downplayed. Processions with the Word of God, incensations, and beautifully-bound lectionaries and Evangelaries are needed to substitute for the vocal and auricular forms of veneration of the Scriptures.

In the code of ethics followed by sign language interpreters, it is mandatory that plain clothes without buttons, patterns, or imprints be worn, as these would distract the viewer from the interpreters’ hands. 17 Ideally, a similar principle would be observed in liturgical environment for deaf congregations, as interior design can visually distract from the liturgical action. In this sense, the Deaf Catholic

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13 In Eucharistic Prayer I, for instance, Missale Romanum (2002), nos. 25, 89-90, 98. See also Walter Wunofsky, “Elevations”, in Emmanuel (January/February 2005), 35-38.
14 A good handbook on Roman liturgical tendencies toward reservation, austerity, and elegance of ritual can be found in A. Kavanagh, The Elements of Rite (New York, NY: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1982).
15 In Sacrosanctum concilium, austerity of ritual is described as “noble simplicity” (n. 34).
16 Cf. General Instruction on the Roman Missal, 349.
parish churches would do well to emulate Cistercian architectural tendencies. Cistercian architecture, with its emphasis on austerity and simplicity, serves to remind the monastic community that they are ‘on the way’ in a lifelong pilgrimage to the Kingdom. The emphasis on pale colour, natural lighting, and near-total lack of decoration serves to draw attention away from the structure of the ‘house of the Church’ and onto the liturgical action itself. Moreover, with the role of natural lighting in Cistercian architecture, the liturgical space used by deaf congregations would not require excessive incandescent lamps to help in seeing the liturgical action taking place. And light, of course, bears tremendous value for mystagogy, especially when brought into dialogue with the Paschalion.

3. Iconography

One of my ongoing projects has been to promote the use of Byzantine iconography in catechesis. As “theology in colour,” icons have long been used to hand off the Christian faith to people who were unlettered. Since sign language still lacks a written form, the use of icons in catechesis is one of the more creative yet traditional ways of using visual media for the sake of mystagogy. Better yet, it is rooted in the Incarnation of God the Word which gives us the sacramental principle that the divinization of matter, or theosis, is the means by which the human race is saved. It is sometimes objected that icons do not belong to the patrimony of the Western Church, as they seem too Greek or Russian. Actually, the use of icons was sanctioned by the Seventh Ecumenical Council (or the Second Council of Nicaea). As such, the veneration of icons belongs to the entire Church. This veneration even enjoys a theological value higher than that of statues.

In churches of the Byzantine Rite, the icons of the twelve Great Feasts can be found immediately above the first row of the iconostasis (the Sovereign Tier): during these feasts, the Orthodox use a display stand in the middle of the nave with the festal icon resting upon it for veneration by the faithful. A similar arrangement was set up for the Sundays of Lent at St. Benedict’s Parish for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in the Archdiocese of San Francisco one year, and icons corresponding to each of the gospel narratives

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19 Cf. General Instruction on the Roman Missal, 325.
20 The ‘Paschalion’ is the technical word for the calculation of the date of Easter, which is defined as (1) the first Sunday following (2) the first full moon following (3) the vernal equinox in the northern hemisphere. The symbols of light and life are strongly suggested by the interplay of spring and moonlight on a dark night.
23 Whereas icons enjoy an elaborate theological significance, the use of statues have only been ‘sanctioned’ by the twenty-fifth session of the Council of Trent (4 December 1563). Icons are specifically used for liturgical purposes; statues, on the other hand, are not used liturgically except when incensing a representation of the Mother of God or a saint on their respective commemorations. More to the point, the ‘subject’ of icons are not only saints, but also the feasts of the Church. For example, the Eastern Church venerates the icon “Transfiguration” on 6 August. There is no comparable statue of the Transfiguration in Western religious statuary.
according to the RCIA cycle (year A) were used. On Good Friday, two icons, depicting the Crucifixion and the Deposition respectively, were set up on both sides of the chancel. Natural curiosity about such unusual art led members of the congregation to take a closer look at the icons and to begin a discussion: this thereby created not only a catechetical moment but also an especially mystagogical moment because it tied the subjects of the icons into the feast or solemnity being celebrated. Good Friday then began to make more sense to the faithful of the parish.

In the case of our neophyte who was baptized at St. Charles Parish, the baptismal font designed according to the ‘grave’ or ‘tomb’ motif was situated where the icon “Harrowing of Hell” was set up nearby. The same icon was used again in subsequent post-baptismal catechesis to explain what the celebration of baptism meant for the candidate. Our neophyte was astonished to see that the tombs from which Christ pulled out Adam and Eve had a remarkable resemblance to the baptismal pool.

“Just as Christ pulled Eve from the tomb,” I explained, “so too did Christ pull you out from the tomb of baptism to a new, risen life.” Her face lit up with understanding: this was her “Aha!-moment.” The continuity created between the sacramental celebration and the iconography helped our neophyte understand what she had experienced at the Paschal Vigil.

If, however, our neophyte was baptized with a few drops of water on the head suspended over a font, how would it have possible to draw a parallel between the mystery of Christ’s descent into hell and the mystery of baptism just celebrated? There would have been none.

Iconography can also assist deaf people in making the act of faith in the “thing” of the sacraments; this may be otherwise difficult to explain as the subject of catechesis. In the mystagogy of the Eucharist, in order to highlight the “thing” of the sacramental encounter with Christ, we procured the icon “Bread of Life” which shows Christ standing in a chalice with his arms outstretched, inviting the viewer into deeper communion with him. Another icon, the “Communion of the Apostles,” shows the Lord distributing his Sacred Body and Precious Blood to the Twelve. This highlighted for our neophyte that the presider at Mass stands in the place of Christ who not only receives our homage, but also serves us as esteemed guests at his paschal banquet.

At St. Mark’s Catholic Community of the Deaf here in the Archdiocese of Edmonton, a PowerPoint slide presentation has been developed for use during the Profession of Faith at Mass. Each article of the Apostles’ Creed is accompanied by one or two icons that depict the article of faith being proclaimed.

“I believe in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God...” is accompanied by both the “Baptism of the Lord” and “Transfiguration” icons, since in both instances the synoptic gospels record the Father testifying “This is my beloved Son!”

For some of the articles of the Creed which are difficult to visualize, such as “He will come again to judge the living and the dead,” we use the icon “Last Judgment” used by the Byzantine Church on the second Sunday prior to the beginning of Great Lent.
By associating icons with each article of faith in the Creed, the deaf believer comes to understand—visually—the content of faith that the Creed intends to pass on. It places ‘theology in colour’ to the advantage of a highly visual culture. Icons, then, aim to reveal the mystery that remains elusive from our natural senses; it puts to colour and shape the ‘thing’ of the mysteries of faith. In turn, it also assists the faith of the deaf person by making visible what is truly invisible. It is a faint sketch of what we profess when we say, “I believe in God...creator of all things visible and invisible.”24

CONCLUSION

Mystagogy in the Catholic Deaf community has often been more fruitful than other sectors of the Church in catching details and nuances in the sacred liturgy, especially because of the Community’s strong emphasis on the faculties of sight and touch. By turning these ‘catches’ into catechetical moments—or better yet, “Aha!-moments”—deaf Catholics can be led to a better understanding of the faith. One of the more immediate aims of pastoral ministry in the Catholic Deaf community, as I see it, is to develop a flourishing liturgical life that makes full use of symbols which in turn create more opportunities for ‘catching’ details and nuances in the liturgical action that perennially generate catechetical moments. The method of textbook-catechesis that omits references the Church’s liturgical life should be abandoned in favour of an intensely visual and meaningful celebration of the sacraments that is sensible, that makes sense and appeals to the senses.

If “the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed,”25 then by what mental gymnastic can we excuse ourselves from pastoral ministry to the deaf that allows for a minimalist approach to the celebration of the sacraments? By raising the bar of our liturgical praxis and consciously taking into account the uniqueness of deaf culture and language, we not only arrive at true inculturation of the sacred liturgy, but also at “full, conscious, active participation”26 mandated by the Second Vatican Council.

HOLY WEEK — A LAMP UNDER A BASKET

Dr. Glenn Byer

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The rites of Holy Week as we know them, and especially the Triduum, were only recently rediscovered with the revision and restoration of Holy Week in 1951 and 1955. We should see this as recent because it takes a generation or two for these rites to get into our culture, into our soul as a Church. The phase we are in is the phase of learning, encouraging and promoting these rites. In a world that seems less open to religion and ritual than it was in generations past, these

25 Sacrosanctum concilium, 10.
26 ibid, 14.
tasks are even more challenging. So maybe it’s not a surprise that if we’re not exhausted from praying by Easter Sunday night, we will certainly be exhausted from all the details and schedules and assigning of people to tasks. Still it’s not enough just to do the rites; we need to be working towards a point where, for our people, these days are among the highlights of the year. At the same time, we are building traditions that will eventually become part of our people’s DNA. Then a much wider swath of the parish will eagerly carry out the traditions that have been handed down, either from grandparents or from communities of people that have been embraced later in life through the RCIA. What is interesting is that the more we do this, the less we will have to worry about all those details that are currently exhausting us. A couple of examples will suffice.

**THE EASTER FIRE**

This fire needs to be our light in all the nighttimes of our lives. As a nation of people who have sat around campfires, or as First Nations peoples who may have experienced ritual fires, we already know a good deal about the power of a flame against night skies. The sparks going up into the darkness, the fire and the people both warming the community gathered there: we know about this. But how much of this is in our Catholic souls on the eve of Easter? Not a lot if the fire is lit in broad daylight, in a portable barbeque. If this sounds like the usual complaint of a liturgist, well, in part it is. But it is more than that. As a liturgist, I have been more concerned about questions like, “Who’s getting the wood?” “Will the fire last until the blessing of the candle?” Or, as in one especially big blunder, the year Father Joe looked at me while standing at the fire and said, “Where’s the paschal candle?” It had been left in the church. The holiness of the night, the power of the fire, none of that resonated in my soul. I was worried (and not always effectively!) about details.

So, what needs to change? For a first step, how about getting fire experts to be the ones who tend the flame? Guides and Scouts are pros at this and, often, so are the elders in our midst, many of whom have been experiencing the power of the bonfire all their lives. Bring them together and let them be the ones who every year tend to the lighting of the fire as the sun sets. The ritual allows for the fire to be burning ahead of time. I think that should be the norm. Imagine several hours of elders and campers sitting around the flame every year singing the same songs, praying the same prayers, and telling stories of other fires in other years. As years go by, children might leave the guiding/scouting movement and new ones join, but many would still be there to tend this flame. Elders will certainly leave us, but we should be able to almost touch their memory as we gather around this once-a-year fire. Imagine a hundred people or more keeping vigil from the setting of the sun till say around 10 pm or later. That’s an event that people will invest their spirit in, and might even alter vacation plans to attend. That’s an event that would get on the local news. And most importantly that’s an event that will preach the Gospel of the resurrection. By the way, even those of us who are responsible for preparing the Easter rites need to work towards making time to be at the fire and pray.
Ultimately we need to develop a group dedicated to this work—call them the “Keepers of the Flame;” let them spend the year visiting Catholic schools and social groups to talk about the importance of the Easter fire, and to encourage safe gatherings around other fires throughout the year. They could even have jackets. The goal here is to work toward the point when all this fairly involved preparation will not even require a reminder to those entrusted with the tradition. In time, more likely will be the situation where those who are entrusted with the rite not only remind us that they are on the case, but are promoting participation at the Easter fire and offering individual invitations to people throughout the community. If we can run the Olympic torch from an invented ceremony in Greece and give it daily coverage on the news, then surely we can light a substantial Easter fire that matters to our people.

THE PALM SUNDAY AND HOLY THURSDAY PROCESSIONS

Ultimately, humans like to travel in herds. Whether it is going for a hike, watching a parade or even coming to church, we like to move as a group. We see this in some of the devotional activities that have sprung up around Holy Week—the outdoor Way of the Cross is just one among several such events. And though it is a recent rediscovery, Roman liturgy is by nature processional. Just look at the way we celebrate Mass and we see it all over the place—at the beginning, with the Gospel Book, with the dismissal of the catechumens (processions can go forth from us too), with the gifts, at Communion and so on. The learning that can nourish the lives of our people, and especially through the processions of Holy Week, is that liturgical processions reflect the challenge God offers us in the journey that is our lives. We are called to go somewhere that we may not have planned, and we are called upon to do it together with others who have heard the same call. So we need to honestly ask what a procession that looks like a red vestment version of every other weekend Eucharist does for us. Truthfully? Not much. So too for a procession with the Blessed Sacrament that ends less than ten feet from where it started.

What should we do to promote and encourage these rites? How can we impart this learning to our people? The rites themselves offer us ways to do all of this. On Palm Sunday the rites call for us to gather somewhere other than the church and make our way to the church. On Holy Thursday the reverse is true. The rites present in the church building is a real sign of God’s call—a call to come to worship, a call to go forth and to serve. These processions do something that words alone cannot do. And what is more, ten or twenty years of walking that same path with an ever-growing section of the community will go a long way to create that sense of prayer and community that we keep saying we want.

If we don’t have the property at hand to do these processions, then at least for Palm Sunday we need to find a park or a parking lot, a movie theatre, a hall, someone’s yard, any place where we can gather. Again, there are a thousand details. In my book on hospitality, I speak of real concerns around having people walk any distance—insurance issues, tripping hazards, ice and snow, the frail and differently-abled; all of these things need to be dealt with. But again, they can be dealt with, especially if you insist on making this a tradition of the whole parish, and insist on having the same groups
of people own the details of the rite and promote it throughout the year. Greeters and ushers lining the path of the procession; men’s and women’s groups, prayer groups and others taking turns leading their same verse of a song that is used every year. Eucharistic visitors helping those confined to wheelchairs. Idealistic? A whole lot of work? Perhaps, especially the first couple of years. Worth the effort? Absolutely. The processions of Holy Week should be among those times in the year when people know that the church building is a powerful symbol of our true home in heaven. A final detail on the Palm Sunday procession can be added: For the ritual this is a particular moment when the children of the community should be called upon – the antiphon Pueri Hebraeorum (or, the Hebrew Children) is assigned to this day, and so children should be involved in a particular way.

To develop this vision of prayer in Holy Week as the work of the whole community requires a great deal of planning and preparation. That planning starts with probably not changing much of anything this Holy Week. This year we simply need to do what we have been doing as well as we can. The only addition is to create a record – a video, audio, written record of everything that currently happens. We will probably be surprised at how much is already going on.

Once we review these records and know what we are already doing, we can set out maybe a 6-year plan – that’s twice through the 3 year liturgical cycle – to develop the liturgical events of these days. That sounds like a long time, but given the scope of what we are hoping for it probably takes that long to get things ramped up. Remember that we are still in the early stages of learning these rites and recall too that great cathedrals were built over centuries – those who laid cornerstones never lived to see them completed. St. Peter’s took 120 years to build.

The good news is that we don’t have to go too far to find out what should be included in a full and robust Holy Week. There is an excellent resource which is turning 22 years old this year. It is called the “Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts” and it was issued in Rome (Protocol number 120/88) over the names of Paul Augustin Cardinal Mayer, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the secretary Archbishop (later Cardinal) Virgilio Noe. This is a great document, one which we should read every year before and after the rites of Holy Week are celebrated.

The circular letter points to three core issues, and then wisely goes through the entire 96 days – Ash Wednesday through Pentecost, pointing out what the rituals expect. While this is not the place to review all that is contained there, we can nonetheless reflect on what the document sees as the core issues (#3).

1) The Easter Vigil is celebrated as if it were any other Saturday Evening Mass

2) Triduum celebrations are not held at the correct times, often because devotional practices take precedence over the Liturgy

3) This is caused by inadequate formation regarding the central place of the paschal mystery
THE EASTER VIGIL IS CELEBRATED AS IF IT WERE ANY OTHER SATURDAY EVENING MASS

This is the first point made in the document, and it applies to all of the celebrations of Holy Week. The celebrations of these days need to be fuller and not just a longer weekend Eucharist. I remember my dad, on the way home from an especially long service, making the observation, “Well, we’ve been.” It was not a compliment. So what should we be doing to celebrate fully without making the faithful feel like they’ve been put through the mill?

The same three tasks come to mind here:

A. Promote the liturgy – but do it honestly. Tell people that this Mass is different. We once put an ad in the bulletin to let people know that the Easter Vigil was going to be a true vigil – a time apart – that it would last three hours. Of course, we also prepared people for this service with catechesis on what would be happening, and we told them it was going to be a long one. Imagine the smiles when, after having started at 10:00 pm, Father Bob looked up as he was about to enter that most holy prayer, the Eucharistic Prayer, and said, “Happy Easter!” It had just turned midnight, the Vigil was complete and we were ready to begin the solemn Easter Eucharist. The whole celebration was over in two and a half hours. People commented afterwards that it seemed like no time at all. They had been prepared: they were ready to vigil.

B. Encourage participation in the Liturgy. For such important and relatively intricate events, we need to recruit the very best so that people will be able to focus on what is happening. I am all for democracy, but when it comes to these most holy celebrations, we need the very best people at the helm. The best music, the best proclamation of the readings, the very best environment. And let the rites speak to as many people as possible. Invite people to participate in the emptying of the tabernacle on Holy Thursday and to strip the altar after the Mass of the Lord’s Supper as the rites advise. But more than this, invite people who may not be active in the parish to help put the whole church building through a similar simplification. Clear the entrance of all those pamphlets, folding tables and the like.

As a community, we need to clear our calendars. How can we truly focus on these demanding celebrations if they happen to coincide with the third Thursday which is always Parish Council? Clear both our church and school calendars. This applies to choirs and other liturgical rehearsals. They should all be done ideally before Holy Week begins, but at least by Palm Sunday night. Then we can truly celebrate more fully.

When it comes to environment, consider this: we bring entire trees into our homes and churches at Christmas. Why would we do less at Easter? For music, we should be combining all our forces and, with no apologies, spend some money on getting instrumentalists. Growing up, the only time I ever saw someone other than a keyboard or guitarist at church was at the Easter Vigil. I still recall the saxophone (!) announcing the
Resurrection with the majestic refrain of Jan Vermulst’s Psalm 150, Alleluia! A-a-leluia! Allelu-u-ia! Having made the most of the darkness to light, the readings and the rest, that once-a-year announcement really meant something to me. All of these things encourage participation in the rites themselves.

C. Let the community learn the rites. To accomplish this, it is important that we don’t change things too much. This may seem to counter all that has already been written, but the fact is, we are still learning how to celebrate these days. I learned this the wrong way one Holy Thursday. A parishioner came up to me to say that she didn’t feel like it was Holy Thursday because we hadn’t sung “The Lord Jesus,” by Gregory Norbet. Actually, she didn’t even know the title: to her it was just “that footwashing song.” We had been using it for a bunch of years, and I had just grown weary of it. Like Christmas carols, we would be wise to develop a standard list of what is happening these days. We make it the best we can as we go, but then stick with it for a few years. More broadly, if we want people to participate, we need to use songs and rites that are familiar. It is always wrong to use an unfamiliar Mass setting at the Easter Vigil. It just is.

TRIDUUM CELEBRATIONS NOT HELD AT THE CORRECT TIMES, OFTEN BECAUSE DEVOTIONAL PRACTICES TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER THE LITURGY

Learning about the Liturgy takes precedence here. It seems first of all that we need to know what the Triduum – the entire Holy Week – celebrations are and what they are about. This may seem a bit silly, since of course we know that – or do we? It is not a week we want to fill with non-liturgical devotions. The daily Masses of Holy Week, with their wonderful readings from Hebrews help frame what is going on. The Ritual book for the RCIA offers great suggestions for Morning and Evening Prayer for Holy Week, especially on Holy Saturday morning when the preparatory rites can be celebrated with the Catechumens. These are but a glimpse at the rites that the Church proposes. Our task is to make the Liturgy of the Church as robust as we can. If there is energy left over, then devotions such as the Way of the Cross can fill that need.

Perhaps we should choose to add one of the proposed liturgies each year for the next six years. Now is the time to make the decision of what to add in 2011. Why? We should spend the coming year learning about that liturgical form and its purpose. If we want to add Holy Saturday Morning Prayer, then during the course of the next year we need to learn about and celebrate Saturday Morning Prayer with various groups and for various occasions. It is not for nothing that the Circular Letter on the Easter Feasts includes the much broader period of the Lenten and Easter seasons. We can’t expect our people to suddenly embrace a new prayer form just because we say so. They need time to learn by doing it.

With all that we are already doing, it may seem strange that we need to add more liturgies, but maybe we aren’t starting from scratch. Look at Holy Saturday for example. If our church has an active RCIA, we know that there are the preparatory rites of Holy Saturday morning. If our church has the devotional practice of

While the Priest receives the Sacrament, the Communion Chant is begun with the purpose of expressing the communicants’ spiritual union by means of the unity of their voices, of showing joy of heart, and of highlighting more the “communitarian” nature of the procession to receive Communion. The singing continues for as long as the Sacrament is being ministered to the faithful. If, however, there is a hymn after Communion, the Communion Chant should be ended in a timely manner.

Care should be taken that singers too can conveniently receive Communion.

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blessing the Easter foods, perhaps around noon, that is another gathering. What then, if the environment committee and sacristans come in during the afternoon to prepare the altar area and the baptismal font for the great vigil, and then later in the afternoon comes the group we talked about earlier, the keepers of the flame? It seems to me that we have the makings for a full day of prayer – craft the RCIA preparatory rites around Morning Prayer, the blessing of the foods around Midday Prayer, and why shouldn't the environment people and sacristans work in a spirit of praying the Hours? They, probably more than most, are aware of what time it is! We could have stations of prayer – gatherings in different parts of the building at specific hours throughout the day, and have them led by different groups of people. Many of these gatherings will be small, especially for the first couple of years, and maybe always, but the spirit of prayer will feed the entire community.

**THIS IS CAUSED BY INADEQUATE FORMATION REGARDING THE CENTRAL PLACE OF THE PASCHAL MYSTERY.**

This final core issue serves us well as a conclusion. So many callings in life require ongoing formation. Doctors, insurance agents, teachers all have to attend professional development days. As priests and lay people who invest so much of our lives in the business of the Liturgy, it seems that ongoing formation and study on the “central place of the paschal mystery” should be normal practice for us. We need workshops, we need model liturgies, we need to read the documents and commentaries on them. Since we have spent the time together reading these words, we’ve made a good start. Let’s press on.

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**Holy Communion takes on a fuller form as a sign when it is distributed under both kinds. For in this form the sign of the Eucharistic banquet is more perfectly evident, and clearer expression is given both to the divine will by which the new and everlasting covenant has been ratified in the Blood of the Lord, and also to the relationship between the Eucharistic banquet and the eschatological banquet in the Father’s Kingdom.**

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IMPLEMENTING THE ROMAN MISSAL

The National Liturgy Office is preparing a set of catechetical resources for the implementation of the revised Roman Missal. The material will consist of 4 thematic segments, each one in a format that could be used for a 2-3 hour workshop and a fifth unit in the form of a DVD. Each of the workshop units will include a manuscript which may be used by a facilitator, a PowerPoint presentation to accompany the manuscript, bulletin inserts, questions for group discussion and a sample homily.

#1 – HOW DO WE PRAY? THE NATURE OF LITURGICAL PRAYER.

This workshop will focus on the essential characteristics of liturgical prayer. Included in this will be a presentation on the distinction between liturgical prayer and devotional and private prayer.

#2 – THE DYNAMIC OF CHANGE AND THE HISTORY OF CHANGE IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST

This workshop will look at the various names by which the celebration has been known through the centuries (taken from the Catechism of the Catholic Church) and highlight the theological emphasis associated with each name. It can be accompanied by a 40-minute DVD available by LTP and distributed by CCCB Publications.

#3 – PRESENTATIONS ON THE GIRM

The presentations will cover:

- Theological emphases in the revised GIRM
- Ministries (ordained and non-ordained) in the GIRM
- Role of the Assembly in the GIRM
- Music in the GIRM
- Liturgical architecture and objects in the GIRM

These sessions will be recorded on a DVD and will include study questions for group discussions.

#4 – ISSUES OF TRANSLATION AND CHANGES IN NEW MISSAL

This unit will deal with the nuances of the “new” language versus the previous English translation of the Missal. This workshop will be recorded on a DVD, and will also include catechesis on the implementation of the new language.

#5 – STRUCTURE & MEANING OF THE CELEBRATION OF EUCHARIST

Structure & Meaning of the Celebration of Eucharist will include an instructional DVD recording of Mass being celebrated with the new translation and the revised GIRM. A voiceover script will speak of each part of the Mass, including its structure and meaning and how each part is interrelated. An already completed study guide to the new Missal will accompany the DVD.

Other conferences are also preparing resources. We will review these as they are completed and we may make some of them
available through the National Liturgy Office. We are also preparing a resource for Mass that will include the new translations so that people will have something in their hands to help with the new translations, especially when this involves the people’s responses. This resource will also include four music settings for the new translations.

**THE EASTER VIGIL: WHEN WILL IT BE DARK ENOUGH?**

*Excerpt from National Bulletin on Liturgy, Vol. 37, #179, Winter 2004*

The world of astronomy defines various degrees of darkness. (For example “civil” refers to the degree of darkness at which a court of law acknowledges reduced visibility.) By the consensus of a number of people, “nautical twilight” best matches the meaning of “nightfall” as used in the *Roman Missal* (Sacramentary) for the earliest acceptable time to begin the celebration of the Easter Vigil. Adjustments have been made to accommodate daylight saving time.

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Readers are advised to use the hour given for the centre nearest to their own situation. Readers in the far north are invited to suggest other more relevant centres if those listed prove unhelpful.

**New Liturgical Studies Summer Program for Western Canada**

A new Summer School in Liturgical Studies, designed for all who prepare, lead, evaluate, participate in, and appreciate the liturgical life of the parish, will begin in the summer of 2010. Liturgical ministers, liturgy committee members, musicians, catechists, priests, deacons, and seminarians are invited to participate.

This revised program has been developed to fill the need created by the closure of the Summer School in Liturgical Studies program at Newman Theological College in 2008. A Liturgical Studies program for Western Canada is especially urgent as the work of implementing the revised *Roman Missal* approaches.
Key features of this program include:

• The support of the Western Conference for Liturgy, the Bishops of Western Canada, and the National Liturgy Office.
• A movable venue: it will move to a different major Western centre each summer, allowing local people easier access.
• Two-week time frame and week-long courses: the program will be offered during the last two weeks of July.
• A Certificate in Liturgical Studies will be awarded upon completion of 12 courses (5 core and 7 elective). Participants can complete the certificate requirements in 3 summers.
• Aim of the program: education and practical formation in all areas of liturgy.
This year’s Summer School in Liturgical Studies will take place in Regina, SK, July 19-30, 2010.

Courses offerings (C=core; E=elective):

**Week 1 (July 19-23)**
- Introduction to Liturgy (C) – Glenn Byer
- Sunday Eucharist (C) – Margaret Bick
- Liturgical Practicum (C) – Bernadette Gasslein
- Introduction to Sacraments (E) – Fr. Renato Pasinato
- Liturgical Law (E) – Fr. Roger Keeler
- RCIA (E) – Bishop Gerald Wiesner

**Week 2 (July 26-30)**
- Christian Initiation (C) – Margaret Bick
- Special Questions in Christian Initiation (E) – Catherine Ecker
- General Instruction of the Roman Missal (E) – Fr. Bill Burke
- The Sunday Lectionary (E) – Bernadette Gasslein
- Art and Environment (E) – Fr. Leo Hofmann

*For more information, please contact:*
Linda Boire – Ph.: 780-476-7021 or e-mail: lmboire@telus.net.