The Great Three Days of Easter
National Bulletin on Liturgy
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The Easter Triduum (Three Days) is the centre and high point of the liturgical year. How do Holy Thursday, Good Friday, the Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday form a single, integrated experience? What is the content of each liturgy, and how may they be celebrated well?
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The Great Three Days

How does the church speak about Easter and its liturgies? Here are two post-conciliar statements:

Christ redeemed us all and gave perfect glory to God principally through his paschal mystery: dying he destroyed our death and rising he restored our life. Therefore the Easter triduum of the passion and resurrection of Christ is the culmination of the entire liturgical year. Thus the solemnity of Easter has the same kind of preeminence in the liturgical year that Sunday has in the week. (n. 18)¹

The greatest mysteries of the redemption are celebrated yearly by the church, beginning with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday until Vespers of Easter Sunday. This time is called "the triduum of the crucified, buried and risen"; it is also called the "Easter triduum" because during it is celebrated the paschal mystery, that is, the passing of the Lord from this world to his Father. The church, by the celebration of this mystery, through liturgical signs and sacramentals, is united to Christ, her spouse, in intimate communion. (n. 38)²

Key words include "paschal mystery" and "triduum" (which means three days, and which we use only in connection with Easter). In addition, there is no doubt but that Easter is the high point of the liturgical year.

Questions: To tease apart and come to appreciate more fully the several strands that are woven together so carefully in these statements, we may ask questions such as the following.

• What is meant by "paschal mystery"?
• Why do we include liturgies that occur over a three-day period in a single liturgical feast?
• What is the nature of the unity that encompasses the several liturgies within the Great Three Days?
• How can we celebrate both the unity and the diversity of the Easter liturgies well?

This issue: These and related questions are the concern of this issue of the Bulletin. The history of the Easter triduum is another, and very important subject. It has been considered in previous issues of the Bulletin, and in several of the books mentioned below.

Selected Reading


"The Three Days (part 1)", *Pastoral Music*, 13 (August-September 1989)

"The Three Days (part 2)", *Pastoral Music*, 14 (February-March 1990)


Rupert Berger and Hans Hollerweger, eds., *Celebrating the Easter Vigil* (New York: Pueblo 1983)


Gabe Huck, *The Three Days. Parish Prayer in the Paschal Triduum* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications 1981) This is very helpful at the pastoral level.


Patrick Regan, "The Three Days and the Forty Days" *Worship*, 54 (January 1980) 2-17

Ildebrando Scicolone, ed., *La Celebrazione del Triduo Pasquale. Anamnesis e Mimesis.* (Studia Anselmiana 102; Analecta Liturgica 14) (Roma: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo 1990)


What is the relationship between the three days of Easter and the single feast of Easter? How are we to understand this apparent misuse of the calendar? Here is one approach.

We may begin by asking, “When is Easter?” The question is simple, but the answer is somewhat complex. We know that Easter follows Lent, and so we may also ask, “When does Lent end?” But the answer we receive here might not be the one we grew up with.

After Vatican II: The answers to these two questions changed at Vatican II. We stopped giving the medieval and post-tridentine answers, and returned to those understood by the church between about the fourth century and the medieval period. Not all of us have caught up with this change, or understand its rationale and liturgical implications.

If we look at our kitchen calendars or appointment books, we find that “Easter” is shown as occurring on 19 April 1992, for example, lasting from midnight to midnight. That’s a start, but quite inadequate and incomplete from the church’s point of view.

Time is important: As Catholic Christians we are very conscious of time. We are aware of, and have liturgies for, the hours and days, the weeks and seasons of the year. The liturgical calendar is extremely important in our religious life. We know exactly when Christmas will be, and the dates of many other important feasts. We publish a little book (in Latin, the Ordo; in English, Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy: Liturgical Calendar) that tells us what liturgies we are to celebrate each day.

Throw away the clock: But when it comes to Easter, we seem to discard our usual respect for the clock and the calendar; we seem to play with time in ways that we never do at other times of the year.

Sundown to sundown: Thus the liturgically correct answer to the question, “When is Easter” is that Easter is three days long, not one day. And not three days starting with midnight, or three days starting with sunrise, but rather three days starting with sundown (roughly, 5 - 6 p.m.).

These three days of Easter therefore are:

• from sundown Thursday to sundown Friday
• from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday
• from sundown Saturday to sundown Sunday.
The End Of Lent

**In the afternoon:** Lent ends, therefore, at sundown on Thursday. At the present time Lent simply slips away, almost unnoticed, during the late afternoon of Holy Thursday. In former times the morning and afternoon of this day were times of preparation for the Easter triduum: public sinners were reconciled by the bishop, the oils needed for Easter and the next year were blessed by the bishop, and everyone took a bath. Now these are done at different times.

**Not on Saturday:** Our older view was that Lent ended on Holy Saturday, and that the liturgies of Holy Thursday and Good Friday were liturgies of Lent, not of Easter. Though these liturgies were renewed after Vatican II, many still celebrate them in a lenten spirit rather than in the spirit of Easter. This needs to change.

Two Ways to Calculate

**To add to the complexity** of this situation, the day (midnight to midnight) that we call Holy Thursday is mostly the conclusion of Lent, but also the beginning of the three days of Easter. The days (midnight to midnight) we call Good Friday and Holy Saturday likewise are divided between two different days of Easter calculated from sundown to sundown.

**The liturgies:** When we look at our liturgical celebrations, we see that the first day (sundown Thursday to sundown Friday) has two major liturgies: the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, and the Celebration of the Lord's Passion. The second day (sundown Friday to sundown Saturday) has no major liturgy, but is primarily a period of fasting and private prayer. The third day (sundown Saturday to sundown Sunday) again has two major liturgies: the Easter Vigil and the eucharist of Easter Sunday.

**Triduum:** We call this broader perspective on Easter the "triduum", a word that literally means "three days". We use it only with respect to Easter, however, so it always implies "the three days of Easter," calculated from sundown to sundown. As a technical term in the liturgy, it needs to be learned by all. As synonyms, however, we may use "the Great Three Days" or "the Three Days of Easter," always understanding that we are not counting from midnight to midnight.

**Fifty days:** To add another level of meaning, we also speak of the Fifty Days of Easter too, or the Easter season. It begins with morning prayer on Easter Sunday (in the middle of the last day of the Easter triduum) and lasts until Pentecost.

**To summarize:** The Easter Sunday on our secular calendars (midnight to midnight) is not what we are talking about when we speak of Easter in the church. Instead, we include the three days starting at sundown on Holy Thursday and extending to sundown Easter Sunday, as well as the fifty days extending from Easter Sunday to Pentecost.
Time is Both Absolute and Relative

**Technology:** Why do we do this? Why do we make Easter so complex? One approach to these questions is as follows. In today's technologically sophisticated world, we are terribly impressed with the precision of our timekeeping equipment. We pay close attention to our clocks and watches, even having alarms on wristwatches that go “bing” every hour. We reset our clocks by the time signals on the radio; our television programs are timed to the second; we get upset when planes are late.

**Human experience:** At the same time our human experience of time is not so strictly regulated. We say that time “flies” and that time “drags”; we may “have time on our hands”; the time sometimes “gets away from us.” And so on. Really important human experiences are not tied down to the movements of the clock; rather, the clock is made subservient to our moods and feelings and ideas. Our hearts have their own sense of time.

**More than one day:** So it is with Easter. This is the center of our liturgical life; it is the center of our religious experience; it is the center of our life of faith. And we cannot possibly attend to all we want to do at Easter within the meager confines of 24 hours. We need several days in which to express ourselves in the Easter liturgies.

**Our heritage:** In addition, our ancestors in the faith have handed down a rich heritage of liturgical celebrations for Easter, as well as a tradition of celebrating them over the course of three days.

**But all of these liturgies are liturgies of Easter.** They constitute a unity, several facets of a single gem, several kinds of experience but always of the crucified yet risen Christ. This is the key point. It is not difficult to imagine having several liturgies leading up to Easter. But this is not what the church says. They are all liturgies of Easter. When we say the three days of Easter, this is exactly what we mean – Easter is celebrated and experienced for three full days (sundown to sundown). And, even before we complete these three days, we begin a longer series of Easter liturgies and Easter experiences that last fifty days. But, the church assures us, this is what it takes to fully experience Easter.

**From Year to Year**

**March and April:** Time keeping at Easter is even more complicated than this! The date of Easter varies considerably from year to year. Between 1972 and 1989 it was as early as 26 March and as late as 22 April. Why, when Christmas is so definitively December 25, does Easter wander around in March and April?

**Moon and equinox:** Here we need to appreciate our Jewish roots. Passover is calculated as falling on the first full moon after the spring equinox – March 21 on our calendars; the month of Nisan in Jewish calendars. Easter is the first
Sunday after this: the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox. Calendars based on the cycles of the moon have a different rhythm than the sun-based calendar we usually follow.

**Julian calendar:** Even here there are further complications. From time to time the Jewish calendar has a “leap year” in which an entire lunar month is added. In these years Passover and Easter may vary by about a month, though Easter is usually the Sunday following Passover. In addition, the Julian calendar followed by the Eastern Churches sometimes gives a different date for Easter than that celebrated by the western churches.

Celebrating Easter

**Three days of celebration:** We are called to spend the entire Three Days of Easter – the Great Three Days – the Triduum, in prayer and liturgical celebration. Sometimes this will be in church with the community. Sometimes this will be at home, in private or with the rest of our households, or with small groups of friends and fellow Christians. It is not as if we had three or four chances to “do” Easter, three or four choices of which we may pick any one or two or three or four. No, all the liturgies and quiet spaces of the three days of Easter are for us.

**Our privilege:** It would be sad to think of this great richness as our Easter “duty” or even as our Easter “responsibility.” Instead, it is our Easter “opportunity;” even better, our Easter “privilege.” The more we participate, the better experience of Easter we will have.

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**Our Next Issue**

**The Sunday Lectionary.** What is a lectionary, and what purpose is it meant to accomplish? How is the lectionary organized, and on what principles is it based? How does the lectionary itself interpret scripture? How does it communicate the word of God? Strengths and weaknesses in our present lectionary.
Unity of the Triduum

It is not enough to understand the workings of the church's clock at Easter time. We need first and foremost to grasp the theological and liturgical unity that encompasses the liturgies of the three days of Easter. What binds together the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper (Holy Thursday), the Celebration of the Lord's Passion (Good Friday), the Easter Vigil During the Night, and Easter Sunday?

Death and Resurrection

**Paschal mystery:** All are major celebrations of the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ: all celebrate his dying and his rising. Articles by John Hibbard and John Rose elsewhere in this issue speak more about the paschal mystery.

**Pascha:** It may be helpful also to recall that where our English liturgy says "Easter," the Latin usually has *pascha* or *paschal*. The latter terms hold together better both death and resurrection, whereas "Easter" may mean only resurrection or at least emphasize this element of the paschal mystery. So far as our liturgy is concerned, we do not separate death and resurrection. Easter is never simply resurrection, and passion is never simply death. We always keep the two together in our liturgical celebrations, and this is especially true during the Great Three Days of the Easter Triduum.

Not Historical Drama

**The unity of the triduum** is weakened if we think about these days in a primarily historical way, as walking with Jesus and his friends during the last days of his life. To ask "Were you there when they crucified my Lord," as the African-American spiritual does, is an inappropriate liturgical question. We are not dramatizing or re-creating the last supper, we are not walking with Jesus as he carried his cross, we are not standing at the foot of the cross with Mary and John, we are not witnessing the rolling back of the stone from the tomb, we are not companions of the women as they find the empty tomb. Our liturgies are not dramas of the last days of Jesus.

**As Jake Empereur says:**

Jesus does not die on Good Friday and rise on Easter Sunday. Easter is three days or to put it another way, the three days are one. The liturgy of the sacred triduum affirms that it is impossible to
separate death and resurrection in Christ and that in his glorification are still found the signs of his suffering and death. Holy Thursday is Easter. Good Friday is Easter. And the Easter Vigil is Easter.

Holy Thursday should not be seen as concerned with some kind of reenactment of the Last Supper. It is not an attempt to celebrate what historically happened on the night before Good Friday. It is not a feast of the Institution of the Holy Eucharist in terms of an historical dating of when this sacrament came into being. It should be noted that while one of the scriptures used this day does refer to the institution, it is the second reading and not the more important one, the gospel. The Johannine story of the washing of the feet of the disciples is what keynotes Holy Thursday. The primary import of Holy Thursday is certainly not that of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. We already have the feast of Corpus Christi for that.

Rather Maundy Thursday proclaims that our eucharist is verified in our acts of loving service, in our ministering to one another as Christ ministered to his chosen friends. Thursday's liturgy says that now that we have completed our Lenten reconciliation process, we are prepared to confront the glorified Christ at the personal cost of stripping ourselves and washing the feet of marginal people in our midst. In other words, this is a celebration of Easter in terms of our renewing the covenant between God and ourselves. The covenant that we engage in is in continuity with the covenant that God had with the Jews of old and so it is expressed in the form of a meal as was and is the Jewish covenant made visible in the Passover meal. Holy Thursday is the feast of Easter under a special dimension: that our covenant with God is made possible and is presently renewed in the glorified Christ who is the chief worshipper in our liturgy.

If we look carefully at the scriptures and prayers of Good Friday, we discover not a kind of funereal sadness but the exhilaration of the suffering servant who sees the light in the fullness of days, of a people who have a high priest who has opened the way for them and of a chosen race whose king reigns from his cross. This is the day of the cross. Good Friday as a liturgical day probably grew out of the Jerusalem practice of the veneration of the relic of the true cross. It is important to note that the more ancient tradition is the adoration of the cross and not the crucifix. It is the difference between the cross as symbol of victory and the crucifix as symbol of the historical Jesus who dies in ignominy and disgrace that indicates the transformation that took place in the meaning and celebration of Good Friday. Difficult as it is to grasp, Good Friday is not primarily about the historical death of Jesus. It is Easter in terms of the victory of Jesus on the cross on which he died. "We should glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

There is no controversy about the Paschal character of the Easter Vigil. On the contrary for too many Christians this is the only celebration of Easter in the liturgical year. It is the moment of liturgical release after the melancholy and oppressiveness of the preceding week. But the understanding of Easter as "three days" can place the vigil in a more theologically nuanced perspective. The baptism
that we highlight in this liturgy, whether in terms of initiation or in terms of renewal, is initiation into resurrection and death. The Easter Vigil is not all unrestrained jubilation. Death and life are irreversibly wedded together. This ambiguity pervades the vigil service in its climactic ritual of baptism: water is life and water is death. Christ has come through death to victory but still bears the scars of his trials. Often, because we are uncomfortable with such ambiguity, we tend to historicize these chief mysteries of Christ. We feel we only have the strength to take on one such reality at a time. And so we separate Friday from Sunday. But while Friday is serious, it is not depressing and while Sunday is joyous, it is realistic in its expression of such joy. The Passover of Christ is one symbol which incorporates the creative tension of both death and life.¹

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**Christ is Present**

**Anamnesis or memorial:** Instead of going back into the past to be with Jesus during his last days, we bring the Risen Christ in the Holy Spirit into the present to be with us today. Today we speak about memorial or anamnesis: bringing a past reality into the present in liturgical celebration in order for us to enter into it in our own lives. We enter into the transforming reality in our own lives, rather than looking at the reality from the outside through an historical lens.

**On Holy Thursday** we do indeed proclaim what Jesus did at the last supper. In the gospel we tell John's version of this story, and in the second reading we tell Paul's version, and in the eucharistic prayer we tell a combination of the versions of Matthew, Mark, Luke and Paul. These accounts balance, complete and complement one another. But the story comes alive — and gives life — by becoming our present experience of the presence of the Holy One and of transformation in and by the Holy Spirit.

**On Good Friday** we do indeed proclaim the story of the death of Jesus. In doing so we use John's account of the passion, in which Jesus is not a helpless and unwilling victim, but always in control of the situation. For John the crucifixion is also Jesus' glorification — his victory over the forces of evil and death. Jesus reigns from the cross. In our liturgical celebration we embrace the cross as symbol not of suffering for its own sake but as symbol of conscious self-giving for love of God and of neighbor.

**Experience of God:** In these liturgical celebrations we believe that the God who was present in the historical events of some two thousand years ago is also present today; that the God who commissioned Jesus to his life of fidelity and service is with us today; that the God who raised Jesus from the dead and sent the Holy Spirit still conquers death and breathes forth the Spirit of life. We not only believe this — we also experience the presence of this God.

Another unifying element that binds the individual liturgies of the Triduum together is Christian initiation. Today we are increasingly conscious that the Easter Vigil is the night for baptism – and not simply baptism in water but the fullness of Christian initiation: confirmation and eucharist as well. And where there are no candidates for initiation, then all still renew their baptismal covenant.

For candidates for baptism: If the Great Three Days is a unity, then the Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper and the Celebration of the Lord’s Passion - Holy Thursday and Good Friday - are also celebrations of Christian initiation as well as the Vigil. They too are important liturgies for candidates for baptism, confirmation and first eucharist. In these liturgies all hear the church named and described in especially important ways; all see how it is that Christians live. All experience the central symbols of our faith in particularly forceful ways. All hear the central stories of our faith.

The stories of Thursday’s and Friday’s liturgies proclaim our rootedness in and relationship to the Jewish people and their celebration of passover; the command to celebrate the memorial feast of passover/eucharist, and our response; Paul’s description of the last supper, based on his own experiences of the eucharistic liturgy; Jesus washing the feet of his disciples, and his command for us to do the same; the story of the suffering servant, and that of the great high priest; John’s distinctive account of Jesus’ passion.

Initiation into what church? The church into which candidates will soon be initiated is one that celebrates memorial feasts given them by God and by Christ; one that washes feet - in whatever concrete ways this needs to be done in our world today; one that shares its food and other resources with the poor; that prays at length for its own needs and those of the entire world; that fasts in anticipation as well as in penitence; one that reveres Christ’s presence in the word; that takes the cross of Christ with enormous seriousness; one that cares about Christian unity, about the Jewish people, about those who do not believe in Christ or in God, about our civil leaders and all in need.

Central Symbols

Transformation: In the liturgies of the three days of Easter we experience the central symbols of our faith in ways that are especially moving and profoundly transforming. Baptism, confirmation, eucharist – water, oil and the laying on of hands, bread and wine; the word of God in proclamation, preaching and response; song, silence, fasting; lay and ordained ministry; footwashing and sharing with the poor; the cross; light; the gathered assembly that is the church, the body of Christ, the people of God.
Passover

Christ our Passover: An additional way in which the liturgies of the Triduum are a unity is that they all are associated with the idea of Passover. The first reading for Holy Thursday is the command to celebrate the Passover as a memorial feast unto the Lord. The Easter proclamation sings, “This is our Passover feast; this is the night when first you saved our ancestors; you freed the people of Israel from their slavery and led them dry-shod through the sea; this is the night in which the pillar of fire destroyed the darkness of sin.” We read the story of the passing through the Red Sea at the vigil. The communion verse on Easter Sunday quotes Paul: “Christ has become our paschal sacrifice; let us celebrate the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” The word pasch and paschal are derived from passover.

The last supper and passover: It is quite popular to speak of the last supper as a passover seder or ritual meal. We need to be careful here, because we really do not know this for sure. It is suggested in the accounts of the last supper in the gospels according to Matthew, Mark and Luke, but it is clearly contradicted by John’s gospel. All of the gospel writers were writing theology and not history, and they were not concerned with the question as we ask it today. We do not have – and probably never will have – enough evidence to settle this question definitively.

In the spirit of passover: What we do know is that the last supper and the death and resurrection of Jesus took place at passover time – close to passover and in the spirit of the passover feast. All the gospel writers – and Paul – interpret Jesus’ last days through the lens of the Jewish celebration and understanding of passover. John has as much interest in passover as do the other gospel writers – probably more – but he expresses this in his own unique fashion.

Easter is always on Sunday: The church through the centuries has expressed this ambiguity by refusing to celebrate Easter on the date of the Jewish feast of Passover, but by celebrating Easter on a Sunday that generally is within the week following Passover. The western church has tended to follow the synoptic gospels and identify the last supper with passover; the Eastern Churches generally follow John’s gospel and deny this.

Exodus: Passover commemorates the central mystery of the Hebrew bible – the exodus from Egypt. In this context exodus must be seen broadly; it includes not only the initial deliverance from Egyptian power and the passing through the Red (Reed) Sea, but also the making of the covenant between God and his people at Sinai, the wandering in the desert for forty years, and finally the entrance of the chosen people into the promised land.

A paradigm of salvation: The original exodus from Egypt became the paradigm of the saving love of God for the chosen people, and when in subsequent generations God saved the people from other calamities and captivities (especially the exile in Babylon), each new act of deliverance was seen as a new exodus. It thus was natural to look forward to the final and perfect deliverance, that of the messianic era, as a new exodus also.

The exodus and passover of Jesus: The early church saw in Jesus’ great acts of love, especially in his death and resurrection, the final exodus and
passover to which all had looked forward. In his death and resurrection Jesus identified fully with the original and subsequent exodus', and in describing Jesus' actions, Paul used the words "Christ our paschal lamb has been sacrificed" (1 Corinthians 5: 7). At the same time, of course, the exodus-passover event was transformed and given new meaning by Jesus' experience.

Community: Although one usually becomes a member of the Jewish people through birth from a Jewish mother and (for males) through circumcision, it is by annual participation in the Passover Seder that the bible and Jewish tradition see one as reaffirming, continuing and strengthening one's bond with the community of Israel.

Identification or excommunication: After all, it was in the event of the exodus from Egypt that the people were constituted as God's own people, and it is in the annual Passover Seder that one participates in the exodus and renew's one's identification personally with this central event of salvation. If one deliberately neglects to participate in the passover Seder, it is as if one turns one's back on the exodus, on the event which constituted peoplehood, and on the God who saved and saves.

Christians become part of the people of God through baptism, in which we identify ourselves with the death and resurrection of Jesus, and hence with his exodus. To signify this new identity on an ongoing basis, to renew its meaning and strengthen the association with the community of believers, one must annually celebrate Easter, the Christian passover feast, and weekly come together in the eucharistic celebration on the Lord's day. If one neglects regularly to celebrate the memorial of the exodus of Jesus, the promise of baptism remains unfulfilled and one dissociates oneself from one's people.

Memorial: In biblical language and thought, "memorial" (Greek, anamnesis; Hebrew, zikkaron) refers to liturgical celebrations that celebrate and represent past mysteries of salvation in forms that can be participated in and appropriated personally by those living in the present. By participating in the prayers, readings, songs and customs of the Passover Seder, by seeing the symbols of the exodus, hearing their meaning explained, and eating some of these symbols, those present today relive the experience of the original exodus and join with their ancestors who took part in the original event.

Our participation: This is explicitly stated in one of the great prayers of the Seder: "In every generation each of you should regard yourself as though you personally went forth from Egypt. It was not only our ancestors whom the Holy One, blessed be God, redeemed from slavery, but we also did God redeem together with them."

At Easter and in the eucharist, Christians obey Jesus' injunction, "Do this in memory of me." Our language limps here, as the word memorial is far weaker than its biblical antecedents. We might do well to paraphrase the Seder prayer and say, "In every time and place each of us should regard ourselves as though we personally died and rose with Christ. It was not only Jesus whom the Holy One, blessed be God, redeemed from the slavery of death, but we also did God redeem together with him."

Passover is indeed a key paradigm for understanding and experiencing the Easter mysteries. Anyone who is invited to celebrate Passover in a Jewish home should leap at the opportunity.

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All our talk about the wonders of the liturgies of the Easter triduum is empty and wasted if we all do not experience them as exceptionally good liturgies. To make them so takes careful preparation.

**Preparation** for the Great Three Days begins the first week of Lent, if not before. If special choir music needs to be ordered, fabrics created, etc., then one has to start well before this.

It is well also if parish ministers can take a long-term view of the needs of the community. In moving a parish toward fuller and more authentic celebrations of the Easter triduum, it may be that not everything can be done this year. A strategic plan might be worked out, with specific goals for the next two or three or five years. (Of course such plans will be flexible.)

**Anticipation:** From the very beginning of Lent, the community needs to look forward to Easter. And not just Easter in a general sense, but to the Three Days of Easter. People need to hear terms such as triduum, three days, great three days. They also need to hear that Lent ends the afternoon of Holy Thursday. Let the questions arise during the course of Lent, not just the last week.

**Priority:** People also need to hear that the Great Three Days of Easter, as a single, united feast, is the climax of the liturgical year. It needs to be extremely important for them; they need to look forward to the celebration of Easter.

**Prayerful contemplation:** Throughout Lent, but more frequently as time goes on, parish ministers will read, study and pray over the readings, liturgical texts and songs of the Easter liturgies. These need to take root deep within us if we are to communicate their deep meaning as we minister.

**Reflection and reminder:** After each year's celebration of the Easter liturgies, it is a good idea to reflect, alone and with others, on how they have been celebrated and people's response to them. What made them really good liturgies; in what ways do they need to be improved; how might things be changed next year. Because they come but once a year, we easily forget such things from Easter to Easter. Write down the key reflections; keep a paschal diary.

**Children and families:** The Easter liturgies are extremely important for children and youth and their families; they also pose challenges for families. Some parents don't take children of certain ages to the Easter Vigil because, they say, the children are cranky the next day. And yet, how will children feel how special this liturgy is if they are not taken from an early age?

Parish ministers need to talk to parents about this, both respecting their needs and those of the children, but also telling them how important the Easter liturgies are and encouraging them to bring their children. It is also desirable to undertake an "examination of conscience" to see if the liturgies are indeed good for the children.
Attitudes: Parish ministers need to believe in the importance of the Easter liturgies in order to be good leaders and ministers. They need to be determined to do them well, take ample time and not rush, and grasp the unity that encompasses the liturgies of the Three Days of Easter.

Hospitality: The Easter liturgies attract marginal Catholics as well as guests and visitors from other Christian and non-Christian communities. There is a great need for generous and gracious hospitality, both by ministers designated for this purpose, by the parish staff, and by the entire community. Good participation aids are needed as well. Such hospitality cannot be overdone, and is itself an Easter sacrament.

Liturgical ministers: The Easter liturgies need lots of liturgical ministers. If possible, “teams” for each liturgy should be designated, rather than having the same few people do everything. In fact, this is a good occasion to draw new people into the liturgical ministries (so long as they can be properly prepared for their role).

Readers: Because the word of God is so important in the Easter liturgies, those who proclaim the word have an especially important role to play. All readers, plus presbyters and deacons, need to study the readings, pray over them, and rehearse them in church with the microphone.

Musicians: Musicians too have an extremely important role to play in the Easter liturgies. Again, if possible, there should be teams for individual liturgies in order not to exhaust people. Music needs to be chosen carefully, and rehearsed conscientiously. There cannot be too much Easter music!

Space and movement: The Easter liturgies have special requirements with respect to space and movement. Footwashing, procession of gifts for the poor, veneration of the cross, plus the sacraments of initiation at the Vigil, all require special planning. All the liturgies include processions of ministers and people. In addition, the likelihood of large crowds of people should be anticipated.

Decoration and art: Flowers, special altar cloths, banners and other decorations are important in the Easter liturgies.

The quiet times: The Easter liturgy is celebrated at home as well as in church; in between the “big” liturgies. Explain and encourage the paschal fast on Good Friday and Holy Saturday. Over the course of time explore materials to help families pray in their homes during the Great Three Days. Encourage people to get together for small group liturgies on Holy Saturday. If the parish is not going to celebrate Easter vespers, convents or other groups might provide leadership and hospitality for this liturgy.

Social: Plan to have social gatherings following the vigil and the Sunday morning eucharist. Cookies, juice and coffee – perhaps some fruit – people are glad to have an opportunity to say hello and share some reflections on their Easter experiences.

Energy: The preparation process needs to be shared as widely as possible, just as liturgical ministries need to be shared. Otherwise a few key people become exhausted and cannot really celebrate as they and others would want. Take care of yourself and your fellow ministers.

Know what you are doing: It cannot be repeated too often: know the liturgies thoroughly.
The Paschal Mystery

John G. Hibbard

The Reverend John G. Hibbard is a presbyter of the archdiocese of Kingston, and Director of the National Liturgical Office. He is completing studies for the Master's degree in Liturgical Studies at the University of Notre Dame.

Source and goal: There is an old joke among students of liturgy that the answer to any question in liturgy is "the paschal mystery." In many ways there is a lot of truth to the statement. The paschal mystery is the source and goal of all worship.

Mystery: Some may guess that the word mystery implies that we cannot understand it, so there is nothing further to be said. However, in liturgy, the word mystery does not imply something that cannot be known, but exactly the opposite: something that is known. Paul wrote in Ephesians that God "has made known to us the mystery of his will..." (1:9). In the words of Ephesians the mystery is that God chose us in Christ, destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, redeemed us through the blood of Christ, forgave our trespasses, and made us an inheritance in Christ as God's own people through the promised Holy Spirit, the pledge of our inheritance.

God's will and our life: This mystery has been revealed and initiated through Christ in the Spirit. What was hidden is now laid open and accessible. What we see is the love of God, hidden, but now manifested, not fully present but pledged. Thus mystery is a door opened by Christ which reveals God's will of saving activity for us, a people chosen and loved. Mystery is the life we are invited to live.

The word paschal tells us how to get into the mystery. It is easy enough to say that the paschal mystery is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but that statement still needs to be opened up, for it contains a wealth of treasures.

Love within the Trinity: For Jesus the paschal mystery was his dying and rising, but the fuller reality of dying and rising speaks of the trust and confidence that Jesus had in the plan of the Father. This is his self-giving. It is an inner reality and quality of life that forms part of a relationship of love within the Trinity. The paschal mystery cannot be separated from the reality, both of the life of the Trinity and what it means to be a human being. In other words, the paschal mystery is incarnational: the life of the Trinity. The relationship that Jesus has with the Father and the Spirit as a member of the Trinity is now lived by human beings. In Jesus these are no longer separated. The same unity and life is promised and given to us.

Resurrection: The paschal mystery leads Jesus through a life of service to the will of God, in the assurance and complete trust that God has ultimate control over each one of us, not just his Son. To believe that God's eternal love will conquer all diversity and all fears, including death, opens up a new world and new potentials, not of our own making, but of divine origin. This is the
meaning of the resurrection. When human control is relinquished to divine initia­tives, there is a new life, there is resurrection.

**A complete and total surrender** of one's life out of pure love is not some­thing that comes easily or readily. It takes a lifetime of work. This is the work of liturgy, to celebrate over and over the paschal mystery in order to recall our destiny, to encounter again the love of God, to see that surrender does lead to the freedom of new life, then to go out and live it. For all of us, it literally takes all our life to accomplish, and in the end we have to surrender every ounce of energy, all consciousness, all energy to the Source of our life. We leave behind all that is known for what is unknown: this is mystery. But the unknown has been revealed in Christ. What awaits us is the fullness of love. Hopefully in the liturgy of the church we have had some experiences or glimpses of that love, even if limited. Enough to lead us to trust and want more.

**Encounter with God:** When we celebrate the paschal mystery (and all liturgi­cal celebrations do celebrate the paschal mystery), we enter into an encounter with God. Thus the paschal mystery is a joint venture of God and human beings, of God and the church, the body of Christ. To celebrate is itself a response to the call of God who has acted on our behalf in the sending of the Son and in choosing us. This encounter also brings the possibility of meeting once again the renewed activity of God in our lives.

**God calls us to enjoy,** to receive, to enter more fully into the life of the Trinity, that is, into a relationship of love and total surrender so that each individual desires to live totally for others and for the common life established in the church through Christ and by the power of the Spirit. Each celebration invites us into a new and refreshing encounter of the infinite God who reveals a new dimension of love (that life of the Trinity).

**In community:** The paschal mystery can only be celebrated in the context of a community: the community of the Trinity inextricably united to the life of the community we call the church. Even when we pray alone, we are not alone, we pray as a member of the body of Christ and we exercise the priesthood of Jesus Christ. As Paul wrote, “now it is no longer I who live, but Christ Jesus who lives in me” (Galatians).

**Never alone:** If in baptism we have been united with Christ, then we are incor­porated into the life of the Trinity. Like Jesus we are one with the Father and the Spirit. How then could we ever think we are alone? How could we ever think only of our own interests, or life? Our life is not for ourselves, but like Christ we must live for others, to serve the world.

**Building up the church:** This self-giving which so characterizes the life and the ministry of Christ is now our mission. Our self-giving is to build up the body of Christ; it is to give our lives for a purpose, that we may share the life that has been shared with us. The paschal mystery is our sharing in the new and sacrificed life of Jesus. The paschal mystery is our living the new and sac­rificed life of Jesus in the body of Christ.

**Memorial:** Liturgy allows us to live the Trinitarian life by submerging us in memorial, remembering what God did in the past so that we will know that God is now acting in this moment. The act of anamnesis (memorial) is not a recalling only, not just a reenactment, but the action of God right now in the life of the church in this very minute. Memorial is walking through the door to
God's presence and unending activity in the world, which lead us to encounter God in the present. Memorial is not just confidence in God's past actions, but encountering God acting in faith in our lives, transforming us into the image of Jesus. Memorial calls forth a faith response on our part to praise God for what God is doing and to intercede for the salvation of the world. This is why praise and petition form the main portion of all liturgical services.

**Voluntary and freely given:** In the end, the paschal mystery cannot force anyone to surrender to God's will, or to give their life for others, or to be a member of the body of Christ. The sacrifice of Jesus was voluntary and freely given. Liturgy invites each one to surrender to God's will and to surrender to our common life in the Spirit. Thus the call of the paschal mystery is to constant conversion.

**Transformation:** In the light of God's love and the freely given gift of Jesus' life, our sacrifice fails in contrast, but the love of God also transforms, little by little. We give as much as we are able today. Tomorrow there will be new opportunities. But always, it is our little in union with God's fullness. Liturgy is not just where we do: it is also what God does. For in the incarnation there is a new partnership: we are one with our God and God is one with us. Liturgy helps us to inch towards the complete and voluntary self-giving of our lives for the building up of the body of Christ.

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**Atlantic Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults Conference**

Sponsored by the Diocese of Saint John, the theme centers on how to live and act as someone signed by the Cross and the Word; participating in a conversion process that changes our lifestyle, value system and priorities. Speakers include Ms. Laurie Hanmer, Archbishop James M. Hayes, and Bishop Joseph J. Gerry.

This Conference will be held in Saint John, NB on September 25-27, 1992. Contact: Atlantic RCIA Conference, c/o Diocese of Saint John, One Bayard Drive, Saint John, NB E2L 3L5.
The Paschal Mystery

John Rose

The Reverend John Rose is a presbyter of the archdiocese of Edmonton, and is completing his doctoral studies at the Institut Catholique de Paris. His dissertation is a study of the development of the concept of paschal mystery by European theologians prior to Vatican Council II, contributions which had a great influence on the work of the Council. Because part of the work of these theologians was to rediscover the thinking of the early period of the church, at times the patristic theologians are quoted at length, in a kind of dialogue with European writers of this century.

The Paschal Mystery? The average Catholic, if asked to define this phrase, might be hard-pressed to do so. And yet its restoration to prominence is the event which has had the greatest impact on worship life of the person in the pew in the last 30 years. Its importance was re-discovered through the liturgical renewal in the early part of the 20th century.

Liturgical Theology of Vatican II

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council taught that, in the sacred liturgy, the work of our redemption is accomplished and the mystery of Christ and the nature of the Church is manifested in a most excellent way.

John Paul II states that the directing principles of Vatican II’s Liturgy Constitution remain fundamental to participation in the liturgy which is the primary and indispensable source of the true Christian spirit. The first principle is the actualization of the paschal mystery.¹

Christ our Lord ... achieved his task (redemption) principally by the paschal mystery of his blessed passion, resurrection from the dead, and glorious ascension, whereby ‘dying, he destroyed our death, and rising, restored our life’ (Easter Preface from the Roman Missal).²

The paschal mystery is Christ’s passage through death to resurrection which is a model of the journey of every Christian. The liturgy has, for its first task, to lead the Christian on that paschal journey which was Christ’s.

¹ John Paul II, Vicesimus quintus annus, 4 December 1988
² Constitution on the Liturgy, n. 5
By Baptism [people] are grafted into the paschal mystery of Christ; they die with him, are buried with him, and rise with him. (Romans 6:4) ... From (Pentecost) onward the Church has never failed to come together to celebrate the paschal mystery ... celebrating the Eucharist in which 'the victory and triumph of his death are again made present.' (Trent, Session 23: Eucharist, ch 5).³

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The Liturgical Movement

The rediscovery of the paschal mystery was made possible by a return to the study of the original sources.

- the scriptures
- the Fathers of the Church
- the liturgy itself.

Gueranger and Beauduin

The liturgical movement began with Dom Prosper Gueranger at Solesmes, France, in 1833. He inaugurated a tradition of scholarly research which spread to other Benedictine monasteries in Germany and Belgium and was also taken up by other scholars, clergy and lay. It was encouraged by Pope Pius X. The "popular" beginning of the modern movement is rightly held to be the 1909 conference of Malines and the impetus of Dom Lambert Beauduin. Beauduin felt that liturgical research would have enormous pastoral implications.

Centre de Pastorale Liturgique

Hence, when the Centre de Pastorale Liturgique (C.P.L.) was founded in Paris in 1943, its main purpose was seen as pastoral. The revitalization of the liturgy was seen as a means of stemming the tide of dechristianization in Europe. The main objective of the C.P.L. was to restore the communal and popular character of the liturgy. Its studies, which were an important factor in preparing for Vatican II, always proclaimed the central character, in liturgical celebration, of the paschal mystery. By their nature, these studies would uncover a great deal of factual information about the history of the liturgy. However, this did not imply an archaeological approach to liturgy, i.e., doing everything the way it was done up to the fourth century. On the other hand, an understanding of how the liturgy was celebrated during that normative period and, more important, why, would give some idea of the theology underlying Christian celebrations.

³ Constitution on the Liturgy, n. 6
Pre-Vatican II Theology of Redemption

When we talk about the paschal mystery, we are really talking about the theology of redemption. In most redemption theology prior to Vatican II, the emphasis was on the death of Christ. The notion of "satisfaction" had so dominated theories of redemption that the resurrection seemed to play an incidental role. Although Aquinas attributed an efficacious causality to the passion, resurrection, and indeed, the entire life of Christ in our redemption, his contribution does not seem to have been completely understood and the role of the resurrection as a cause continued to be largely ignored.

Durrwell's The Resurrection

Francis-Xavier Durrwell's book on the resurrection, written during the 1950's, showed that this truncated view of the economy of redemption did not do justice to the biblical data. To those who tend to see the resurrection as an epilogue, Durrwell maintains that scripture sees the history of redemption differently. He points to the Old Testament theme of descent and ascent that is frequently applied to the Messiah. This appears in many psalms which speak of sufferings similar to those of Christ and, above all, in the last of the Isaiam Servant Songs (ch. 52-53).

The soteriology of Saint John and Saint Paul is most illustrative. The text which balances the importance of Christ's death and resurrection in our redemption in the clearest possible manner is Romans 4:25:

> It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

Eastern Christendom also provided valuable insight into the nature of Christian redemption. The importance of the resurrection in redemption was better preserved in the east than the west. Indeed, the eastern idea that all events in the life of Christ, from Incarnation to Ascension, form part of the mystery which is remembered in the liturgy, corroborated the studies of the sources in the west.

Oscar Cullmann and Salvation as History

The work of French Protestant Oscar Cullmann in biblical theology is also significant. For him, salvation appears in the bible as a history with Christ at its centre. The entire Old Testament is a sacred history which illuminates and foreshadows the New. The history of Adam and of Israel, in this light, is seen as a preparation for the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. French patrologist Jean Danielou (later a Cardinal), saw the value of Cullmann's "salvation history" theme and brought it into Catholic circles.

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5 Oscar Cullmann, *Christ et le Temps* (Neuchatel and Paris: Delachaux and Niestle 1947)
Jean Danielou: Exodus and Passover

Danielou underscored the extent to which the entire patristic literature was a vast commentary upon the bible, the sacraments and the relationship between the two. He deals with (a) the relationship between the Old and the New Testament and (b) the relationship between the Word of God and the liturgy. Hence, his work on “types” in the Old Testament and their application to the Christian liturgy. The recurrence of themes such as the flood and the exodus in baptismal prayers, for instance, points to passage as an archetypal theme in the Old Testament.

The connection between exodus, passover and the sacraments, declares Danielou, is so central that it gathers to itself the whole Christian mystery. The crossing of the Red Sea holds a privileged place among the “types” to which the Fathers refer. It is a type of baptism.

Among the Jewish people there were two paschal traditions:

• the family passover which sees the pasch as the passage of the angel of God over the homes marked with the blood of the lamb (Exodus 12).

• the Jerusalem passover which sees the pasch as the exodus, the passage from servitude (never taken in an entirely physical sense by the Jews) to liberty (Deuteronomy 16). This is the interpretation of the Jewish spiritual writer, Philo of Alexandria. Danielou showed that this Philonian interpretation was by far the more widely accepted in Christian circles.

Odo Casel and Maria Laach

It was German Catholic theology which decisively influenced the study of the paschal mystery, especially the monastery of Maria Laach and the work of Dom Odo Casel.

For Casel, “mystery” is the concept which links together God’s plan for our redemption, the revelation and achievement of that plan in history in Christ and its presentation in the sacraments.

Casel maintains that the Christian pasch was understood by the early Church in the Philonian sense. Thus, “pasch” meant the sacred passage which

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6 Jean Danielou, Bible et Liturgie (Paris: Cerf 1951); and Sacramentum Futuri (Paris: Cerf 1950)

7 Odo Casel, Le Mystère du Culte.
The title of the German original is Das Christliche Kultmysterium (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet 1932)
Christ accomplished through death to lead his Church to eternal life. The "passage...of...the...Lord..."-embracing-his-death-and-his-resurrection, constitutes the true saving mystery. It is the summit of the economy of redemption.

Christ did not come in a glorified state, he came in "the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8:1-4 and 2 Corinthians 5:21). However, he, who was made lower than the angels, is now "crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death" (Hebrews 2:9 and 9:12). Through death and resurrection, Jesus has entered the holy of holies and mounted up to God's throne; and he has made the way for us to God there also (Hebrews 10:20).

Christ Jesus ... though He was in the form of God ... emptied himself ... and became obedient to the point of death - even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him. (Philippians 2:6-11)

Form and Meaning of the Early Christian Easter Feast

Odo Casel showed that passage from suffering to glory was expressed very clearly in the celebration of Easter up to the fourth century. His 1938 essay, "Form and Meaning of the Ancient Christian Feast of Easter", is a landmark of liturgical studies. In early Christian Easter, the pasch, itself, referred to the line of demarcation between death and life. Casel underlines this by the use of words meaning a "crossing", and a "passage".

What we now call Easter, was originally embodied in a complex called "Pascha-Pentecost". "Pascha" was a period of mourning and fasting commemorating the death of Christ which led into a nocturnal vigil. During that nocturnal vigil, the aspect of mourning was broken by the celebration of the Eucharist which inaugurated a 50-day period of rejoicing which was called Pentecost. The pasch was the moment during that annual celebration when the aspect of mourning passed to joy.

The physiognomy of the celebration suggests its meaning. It is the feast of the economy of redemption, an economy achieved by the passage of Christ, through his death, from this world to the Father. In the origins of the Church worship is doctrine, expressed in prayer and mystery.

The first document which speaks of the annual Christian paschal celebrations, the Epistula Apostolorum (ca. A.D. 150), describes a celebration of death and resurrection.

In Tertullian's writings on Pasch/Pentecost, Casel sees a particularly important insight. Tertullian says that the Pasch is the memory of the death of Christ insofar as it is a passage to the resurrection.

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There was no other liturgical feast in the early church except for Sunday. The feast of Christ's passing to his Father was marked by a paschal vigil, preceded by a fast (eventually extended to what we now call Lent) and followed by a 50-day period of feasting. (Ascension and Pentecost were not yet individual feasts.)

Independently of Casel, Canon C. Callewaert arrived at the same conclusions. See his Sacris Erudiri. Fragmenta Liturgica Collecta (Steenbrugge 1940)
Similar testimony may be found in the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus where the paschal night is described as a passage from profound sorrow to profound joy. Similar ideas appear in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, the *Didascalia*, the *de Fide* of St Epiphanius and the *de Pascha Computus* of Pseudo-St Cyprian.

However, it is the Alexandrians who have the deepest New Testament sense of the Pasch in Casel's view. This is not surprising in the light of Philo of Alexandria's interpretation. Origen illustrates that theology which sees the pasch as a symbol of the passage of the believer from slavery to spiritual liberty.

> The Christ, our Pasch, has been immolated and it is necessary to celebrate it by eating the flesh of the Logos, he (the Christian) still celebrates the Pasch, that is to say the feast of passage, by going from the things of this world to God.\(^{10}\)

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**Second Century Christian Eucharistic Controversies**

The practice, rooted in Asia Minor and believed to derive from St John the Apostle, of following the timing of Jewish Passover by ending the fast and beginning the Easter feast on the night of 14 Nisan was known as Quartodecimanism [literally "14-ism"]. It resulted in a controversy between its own proponents and the majority of the rest of the church which began the Easter celebration during the night of the following Saturday/Sunday.

This second century controversy, reported by Eusebius of Caesarea in his *Ecclesiastical History*, has been advanced as proof of the existence of two paschs, one centered around the passion, another around the resurrection. Casel denied this possibility and the Belgian philologist, Dom Bernard Botte, supports him. In Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, it is clear that the feast of Easter is of apostolic origin and consists in one sole celebration following a period of fasting. The paschal controversy concerned only the appropriate date to conclude the fast and begin the celebration. This seems to be borne out by Melito, Bishop of Sardis. As a Quartodeciman [literally, a "14-er"], Melito is inclined to say Christ's pasch is his passion, but we see pretty clear allusions, in this text, to the resurrection and the passage theme:

> He was led forth like a lamb; he was slaughtered like a sheep. He ransomed us from our servitude to the world, as he had ransomed

\(^{10}\) Origen, *Contra Celsum*, VIII, 22

\(^{11}\) Casel identifies three tendencies regarding the date: (a) the Pauline-Johannine, (b) the primitive apostolic, and (c) that which is totally emancipated from the Jewish calendar. The first would have celebrated pasch on the night of 14-15 Nisan, the second on the night preceding the Day of the Lord immediately following 14 Nisan, and the third on the completely independent date finally decided by the Council of Nicea in 325.
Israel from the land of Egypt; he freed us from our slavery to the devil, as he had freed Israel from the hand of Pharaoh... He is the One who brought us out of slavery into freedom, out of darkness into light, out of death into life, out of tyranny into an eternal kingdom; who made us a new priesthood, a people chosen to be his own for ever. He is the Passover that is our salvation.\(^\text{12}\)

During the first four centuries, Easter was never considered purely and simply as a celebration of the resurrection. Indeed, Pasch is defined in terms of the passion by Tertullian in *de Pascha Computus*, and by Eusebius, John Chrysostom (and the Preface of the Mass of Easter). This passion, however, was inseparable, in their eyes, from the resurrection (Romans 4:25). The ancients would never have thought of dividing up the events of redemption and choosing the one they thought most important.

In most of the church, the Day of the Lord (Sunday) prevailed as the day to celebrate the Christian pasch. Certainly, by the time of the council of Nicea in 325, the Quartodeciman question was no longer a significant one for the Church, although the computation of the date for Easter Sunday was.

Christine Mohrmann

Christine Mohrmann, the Dutch philologist, showed that the ancient feast gathered together all of the elements of salvation.\(^\text{13}\) Despite the evolution in the manner of celebrating Easter which took place throughout the centuries, the paschal vigil has retained its character of being the night of the redeeming mystery in all its fullness. Two different conceptions attached to this vigil in Christian thought. The first, inspired by the typological basis of the immolation of the paschal lamb, emphasizes the passion of Christ. The second, which accents the passage from death to eternal life, and which is closely connected with the baptismal liturgy, emphasizes Christ’s resurrection and glorification. She maintains that these diverse conceptions do not proceed from fundamentally different theological thinking; it is rather a case of accentuating either the passion or the resurrection.

A synthesis of the two tendencies is found in the interpretation of St Augustine. He states clearly that *pascha* means *transitus*. Augustine frequently cites John 13:1:

> Before the feast of Passover Jesus realized that the hour had come for him **to pass from this world to the Father.**

In Mohrmann’s view, the Augustinian synthesis, probably reflecting the thinking of most of the church, sees the paschal vigil, the high point of the liturgical year, as a celebration of the entire mystery of redemption, the death as well as the resurrection of Christ.\(^\text{14}\)

\(^{12}\) Mileto of Sardis, *Easter Homily*, nn. 65-71. Quoted in the Office of Readings for Thursday of Holy Week

\(^{13}\) Christine Mohrmann, “Pascha, Passio, Transitus”, in *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 66 (1951) 37-52

\(^{14}\) The latest book on the paschal mystery shows how two concepts of pasch were thus synthesized by Augustine. See Raniero Cantalamessa, *La Pâque dans l’Eglise Ancienne* (Berne, Frankfurt and Las Vegas: Lang 1980)
For since, as the apostle wrote, 'He was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification,' a certain transition from death to life has been consecrated in that Passion and Resurrection of the Lord. For the word Pascha itself is not, as is commonly thought, a Greek word: those who are acquainted with both languages affirm it to be a Hebrew word. It is not derived, therefore, from the Passion, because of the Greek word (pathein), signifying to suffer, but it takes its name from the transition, of which I have spoken, from death to life; the meaning of the Hebrew word Pascha being, as those who are acquainted with it assure us, a passing over or transition.  

Origin and Essential Unity of Holy Week

The idea of celebrating the different episodes of the passover of Christ, e.g., the last supper, Good Friday, etc., is a later development which was, appropriately enough, first made popular in Jerusalem. How natural that the Jerusalem community, with the holy places right on their doorstep, should want to "follow" the Lord through the different events of his paschal mystery. Although the liturgical development become, thus, "episodic" it is clear that the church at Jerusalem saw the entire mystery (death and resurrection) as forming a fundamental unity centered around the principal event of Christ's passage.

It is hard to describe briefly the causes of the decline of the most important element of the Church's annual celebration, the paschal vigil. But decline it did. By the early 20th century the Church was left with the remains of the vigil, the blessing of Easter water on Holy Saturday. The restoration of the paschal vigil in 1951 and the New Ordo of Holy Week in 1956 are, thus, phenomenal events.

Louis Bouyer

Louis Bouyer's 1947 meditation on the last three days of holy week, The Paschal Mystery, shows that although the paschal triduum is divided into Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter, the three really comprise one great celebration. Thus there is no eucharist after Holy Thursday until the vigil. The entire triduum is a memorial of Christ's passage. One never thinks of Christ's death without also thinking of his glorious exaltation; one never thinks of the exaltation without thinking that Christ was exalted because "he became obedient unto death". (Philippians 2:8).

Augustine, Letter 55, 2

It is certainly fitting and perhaps not coincidental that Dom Odo Casel, author of so much research on the paschal mystery, died in 1948 during the Easter Vigil immediately after singing the introductory Lumen Christi.

Louis Bouyer, Le Mystère Paschal (Paris: Cerf 1947). Bouyer is generally considered to be the first to coin the actual term "paschal mystery".
**Easter Sacraments of Initiation**

In the fourth century Christian Easter feast, three sacraments were intimately connected, viz., water (baptism), oil (confirmation) and bread and wine (eucharist). If these sacraments were associated with Easter, Casel says it is because they were the means of initiation into its mysteries. They are true *sacramenta paschalia*.

Baptism is best shown for what it is at Easter, a mystical participation in the death of the Lord (Romans 6) and therefore, a spiritual "crossing over the Red Sea" to life with Christ in God. Wherefore also its positive completion through the fulfillment with the Spirit (confirmation) which essentially goes with it. Hence, the practice of baptism by immersion and the importance of the symbolism of water.

The eucharistic sacrifice is the highest and richest cultic mystery because the redemptive work of Christ, the paschal mystery, becomes mystically present in it.

As a study of the prayers of anamnesis (the memorial acclamations) shows us, it is the crucified but risen Jesus, the paschal mystery, which is the object of the eucharistic memorial. These words of anamnesis or commemoration remained invariable even during the changes to the eucharist after the third century. St Paul says "everytime we eat this bread and drink this cup we proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11: 26). Although he mentions only the death of Jesus, it is clear that the experience of the risen Jesus has made the passion and resurrection of Christ inseparable to the early Christians. In the banquet of the Lord, the commemoration of the suffering Lord has always been joined to that of the triumphant and risen one. The consecration during the Christian eucharist is a new way of remembering such that, every time the commemoration is celebrated, the work of our redemption is renewed.

Father, may we celebrate the eucharist with reverence and love, for when we proclaim the death of the Lord you continue the work of his redemption.\(^\text{16}\)

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**H.-M. Feret and the People of God**

French Dominican H.-M. Feret saw the eucharist prefigured in the gathering of the people of God.\(^\text{19}\)

In the history of that people, there was no event more pivotal than the exodus from Egypt and the Passover which is its memorial. The exodus passover is a type of the eucharistic passover. Thus the eucharist is:

- paschal mystery
- paschal meal
- paschal sacrifice
- real eucharistic passover.

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\(^\text{16}\) Prayer over the gifts for the second Sunday of Ordinary Time (formerly the secret for the ninth Sunday after Pentecost.

The Liturgical Year

The celebration of the paschal mystery revolves around three axes.

- There is an annual celebration centered around holy week with the paschal vigil as its centrepiece. We have already noted that it was the only annual feast in the first century or two of the Church's existence. Gradually it was expanded with the celebration of other events in the Lord's life such as Ascension, Pentecost, Christmas and Epiphany. Feasts of the martyrs (and then virgins and monks) who imitated Christ in his paschal mystery by their passage through death to new life were added fairly soon. Doctrinal and devotional feasts (Corpus Christi, Christ the King, Sacred Heart) were added much later as were the plethora of saints' feasts. Hence the present-day emphasis on the temporal cycle rather than the sanctoral. The struggle between the two continues to our day.

- The weekly liturgical cycle is centered around Sunday, the day of the Lord. The Church celebrates the paschal mystery in virtue of an apostolic tradition which goes back to the very day of the resurrection of Christ every eighth day.\textsuperscript{20} Sunday is the weekly pasch. The Quartodeciman controversy of the second century showed us that the supreme importance attached to Sunday prevailed over the Jewish passover as the appropriate time for the annual celebration of passion/resurrection. The idea of celebrating a devotional feast, a doctrinal feast, a saint's feast, let alone the promotion of a "cause" was completely foreign to the early church. They celebrated an event, the event that gave them hope, life and redemption, Christ's passage through death to glory with his Father.

The Church has been touched by the restoration of the paschal vigil and holy week. Has it been similarly moved by the revitalization of Sunday?

- Finally, there is a daily cycle of celebrating the paschal mystery which is centered around the eucharist in which we become present once again to this great mystery of our redemption every time we take part in its celebration. The eucharist is the principle entire cultic aspect of the paschal mystery. Somehow, every time we celebrate it, "the work of our redemption is accomplished." It is a celebration and not a devotion. The daily eucharist is surrounded and illuminated by the liturgy of the hours and other devotions and the efforts of our Christian lives. Paschally-oriented devotions include the rosary (which meditates all the aspects of the redemptive mystery), and the way of the cross (with the 15th station).

Conclusions

- The mystery of Easter is indivisibly the passion and the resurrection of Christ. Not only did Christ's resurrection follow his death, it sprang from it.

- The celebration of the paschal mystery resides essentially in the paschal vigil (which has made its mark but not yet become "popular").

• The paschal vigil is the summit and vital centre of the entire liturgical year.

• It is the vital centre of the holy week and the Easter octave. It is the celebration of the moment of the Lord's passing to his Father (John 13: 1).

• The liturgy of the Christian pasch is the core of the life of the church where everything is a passage with Christ.

• Sunday has from early Christian times been considered as the memorial of the resurrection.

• It holds in the weekly cycle the position which Easter holds in the annual one.

• The observance of Sunday is probably anterior to the annual celebration of Easter but this is almost impossible to prove.

• The primary principle of the actualization of the paschal mystery is the eucharist which is the centre of annual, weekly and daily celebrations.
Holy Thursday
Mass of the Lord's Supper

We can never spend too much time meditating on the scripture readings and liturgical texts of the liturgies of the Great Three Days.

It is significant that the entrance antiphon for this celebration, which is so oriented toward the eucharist, refers to the cross. Further, the cross is an object of glory.

It is our duty to glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. He saves us and sets us free; through him we find salvation, life, and resurrection. (See Galatians 6: 14)

Readings

The Introduction to the Lectionary describes the readings as follows:

On Holy Thursday at the evening Mass the remembrance of the supper preceding Christ's departure casts its own special light because of the Lord's example in washing the feet of his disciples and Paul's account of the institution of the Christian Passover in the eucharist. (n. 99)

Psalm 115. The blessing-cup that we bless is a communion with the blood of Christ.
1 Corinthians 11: 23-26. Until the Lord comes, every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim his death.
John 13: 1-15. Now he showed how perfect was his love.

The opening prayer tells us why we are here and what we are about to do.

God our Father,
we are gathered here to share in the supper which your only Son left to his Church to reveal his love.
He gave it to us when he was about to die and commanded us to celebrate it as the new and eternal sacrifice.
We pray that in this eucharist we may find the fullness of love and life.

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Washing of Feet

The washing of feet is accompanied by sung antiphons or "other appropriate songs." The antiphons suggested are taken from or inspired by John 13; one comes from 1 Corinthians 13. It is of interest that in medieval times, antiphons sometimes were used that tell of women anointing Jesus' head or his feet: Matthew 26: 7; Mark 14: 3; Luke 7: 38; John 12: 3.

What is the meaning of the footwashing? Xavier Leon-Dufour tells us first, that it was one of the acts by which Jesus founded the church:

In the course of his final meal, after a very solemn introduction (13: 1), Jesus founds the community of disciples by washing their feet (13: 2-20) and by getting rid of the traitor (12: 21-30); the community which he establishes is thus knit together by the master's service to them and by faith in his word. His action must continue to be the prototype and living source of the disciples' way of life: 'I have given you an example so that as I have done for you, you may also do' (13: 15).

The word 'example' can be misleading, since it may be understood as an invitation to 'imitate' the behavior of Jesus, whereas in fact the word 'as' conveys the idea of origination rather than exemplarity. It certainly does set up a comparison: the relation of love among the disciples should be like the relation of love that unites Jesus to the disciples. But there is more than that. It is as if Jesus were saying: 'By acting in this way, I give you the power to act in the same way.' There is an evident similarity here to the commandment of remembrance: 'Do this in memory of me,' inasmuch as both formulas express a will to exercise a control over future time. Their objects differ, however: the commandment of remembrance has to do with liturgical action, the farewell discourse with service to the brethren. According to John, the community is founded upon and kept in existence by mutual service as much as by eucharistic worship; 'have part with' (13: 8) corresponds to 'communion' (1 Corinthians 10: 16).

In addition, footwashing tells us, in part, about the nature of the Christian life. The same author explains:

... the New Testament constantly uses two ways of describing Christian life: that is, alongside cult [worship]... the New Testament over and over again sets everyday life.

Two kinds of remembrance were ... required of Christians: the eucharistic remembrance proper and remembrance in the form of service that was symbolized by the action of Jesus in washing the feet of his disciples.

In both forms of remembrance Jesus transcends time. His words over the bread and cup and his action of washing feet: these are

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what believers are to 'do in remembrance of him' or to 'do in accordance with the example given.' The Church is urged simultaneously to two different actions, one in its cultic life, the other in its secular existence; both, however, are focused on love of the brethren, and both have for their purpose to give life to the Church. The one uses the symbolism of food; the other finds expression in this or that form of service that is suited to the new life of Christians. Both manifest a presence despite absence, whether in the liturgical action whereby the Lord makes himself present to those to whom he gives life, or in the love-inspired action wherein Christians encounter the Lord in the least of his suffering brethren.²

Sandra Schneiders adds, with reference to John 13:1-3, the introduction to the story of the footwashing:

Jesus is presented as acting in full awareness of his origin and destination, e.g., of his identity and of his mission as agent of God's salvific will and work in the world. The introduction, therefore, makes it clear that what follows is not simply a good example in humility but a prophetic action which will reveal the true meaning of Jesus loving his own unto the end in fulfillment of his mission to bring to completion the salvific intention of God's boundless love for the world.

... the foot washing in John is the analogue of the eucharistic institution narratives in the synoptics' accounts of the supper, i.e., it functions as the symbol and catechesis of Jesus' approaching death, his handing over of himself for and to his disciples.³

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**Liturgy of the Eucharist**

The Holy Thursday liturgy contains one other element that, like the footwashing, is celebrated only on this day. The rubric states:

At the beginning of the liturgy of the eucharist, there may be a procession of the faithful with gifts for the poor. During the procession the following may be sung, or another appropriate song.

*(Response): Where charity and love are found, there is God.*

The love of Christ has gathered us together into one.

Let us rejoice and be glad in him.

Let us fear and love the living God,

and love each other from the depths of our heart.

Therefore when we are together,

let us take heed not to be divided in mind.

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² Xavier Leon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread*, 283-284

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Let there be an end to bitterness and quarrels,
an end to strife,
and in our midst be Christ our God.

And, in company with the blessed, may we see
your face in glory, Christ our God,
pure and unbounded joy
for ever and for ever.

It is important to celebrate both the footwashing and procession of gifts for the poor very well.

The preface tells us that the fruits of the eucharist are strength and reconciliation.

Father, all-powerful and ever-living God,
we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
He is the true and eternal priest
who established this unending sacrifice.
He offered himself as a victim for our deliverance
and taught us to make this offering in his memory.
As we eat his body which he gave for us,
we grow in strength.
As we drink his blood which he poured out for us,
we are washed clean.

Now, with angels and archangels,
and the whole company of heaven,
we sing the unending hymn of your praise:

The liturgy concludes with the prayer after communion.

Almighty God,
we receive new life
from the supper your Son gave us in this world.
May we find full contentment
in the meal we hope to share
in your eternal kingdom.

The transfer of the holy eucharist, adoration, stripping of the altar, and removal or veiling of crosses follow.
Good Friday
Celebration of the
Lord’s Passion

This liturgy has three main parts: liturgy of the word, veneration of the cross, and holy communion. The liturgy of the word is special on this day in containing the passion according to John, plus an extended, formal and traditional set of general intercessions. It is simple and rather stark.

Gail Ramshaw comments:

The historic observance of Good Friday provides an excellent example of liturgy as complex metaphor. The tendency to sentimentalize the memory of the passion is chronic. One thinks of the ritual of the Penitentes in which one man, perhaps to his own death, re-enacts the sufferings of Jesus. The liturgy, however, urges metaphor: for even on Good Friday believers gather because of the resurrection. The church assembles, not in hysterical grief, but in somber simplicity, to receive the Isaian images of the suffering servant and the slaughtered lamb; to pray with Christ the metaphoric psalm (22) which begins in despair and concludes with praise; and to hear the Johannine passion, in which Christ ascends the cross as powerful victor, reigning from his majestic cross.

We pray the bidding prayer in the faith that God's mercy is not only for us, but for the entire created order. We sing the paradoxical words of the sixth century poet Fortunatus, 'The Royal Banners Forward Go,' in which the dread cross is the flowering tree of life.

The Readings

The Introduction to the Lectionary states:

On Good Friday the liturgical service has as its center John's narrative of the passion of him who was portrayed in Isaiah as the Servant of the Lord and who became the one High Priest by offering himself to the Father.

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12. He surrendered himself to death, while bearing the faults of many. (Fourth song of the servant of the Lord.)

Psalm 30. Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.

Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9. He submitted humbly and became for us the source of eternal salvation.

John 18:1 – 19:42. The passion of Jesus.

Two alternative opening prayers are offered.

Lord,
by shedding his blood for us,
your Son, Jesus Christ,
established the paschal mystery.
In your goodness, make us holy
and watch over us always.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

or

Lord,
by the suffering of Christ your Son
you have saved us all from the death
we inherited from sinful Adam.
By the law of nature
we have borne the likeness of his [humanity].
May the sanctifying power of grace
help us to put on the likeness of our Lord in heaven,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

The General Intercessions

These prayers repay careful study.

Let us pray, dear friends, for the holy church of God throughout the world, that God the almighty Father guide it and gather it together, so that we may worship him in peace and tranquility.

Almighty and eternal God, you have shown your glory to all nations in Christ your Son. Guide the work of your Church. Help it to persevere in faith, proclaim your name, and bring salvation to people everywhere. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Let us pray for our Holy Father, Pope N., that God who chose him to be bishop may give him health and strength to guide and govern God’s holy people.

Almighty and eternal God, you guide all things by your word, you govern all Christian people. In your love protect the pope you have chosen for us. Under his leadership deepen our faith and make us better Christians. We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Let us pray for N., our bishop; for all bishops, priests, and deacons; for all who have a special ministry in the Church and for all God's people.

Almighty and eternal God, your Spirit guides the Church and makes it holy. Listen to our prayers and help each of us in his own vocation to do your work more faithfully. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Let us pray for those (among us) preparing for baptism, that God in his mercy make them responsive to his love, forgive their sins through the waters of new birth, and give them life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Almighty and eternal God, you continually bless your Church with new members. Increase the faith and understanding of those (among us) preparing for baptism. Give them a new birth in these living waters and make them members of your chosen family. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Let us pray for all our brothers and sisters who share our faith in Jesus Christ, that God may gather and keep together in one Church all those who seek the truth with sincerity.

Almighty and eternal God, you keep together those you have united. Look kindly on all who follow Jesus your Son. We are all consecrated to you by our common baptism. Make us one in the fullness of faith, and keep us in the fellowship of love. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Let us pray for the Jewish people, the first to hear the word of God, that they may continue to grow in the love of his name and in faithfulness to his covenant.

Almighty and eternal God, long ago you gave your promise to Abraham and his posterity. Listen to your Church as we pray that the people you first made your own may arrive at the fullness of redemption. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Let us pray for those who do not believe in Christ, that the light of the Holy Spirit may show them the way to salvation.

Almighty and eternal God, enable those who do not acknowledge Christ to find the truth as they walk before you in sincerity of heart. Help us to grow in love for one another, to grasp more fully the mystery of your godhead, and to become more perfect witnesses of your love in the sight of [all]. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Let us pray for those who do not believe in God, that they may find him by sincerely following all that is right.

Almighty and eternal God, you created [humanity] so that all might long to find you and have peace when you are found. Grant that, in spite of hurtful things that stand in their way, they may recognize in the lives of Christians the tokens of your love and mercy, and gladly acknowledge you as the one true God and Father of us all. We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Let us pray for those who serve us in public office, that God may guide their minds and hearts, so that all [...] may live in true peace and freedom.

Almighty and eternal God, you know the longings of [our] hearts and you protect [our] rights. In your goodness watch over those in authority, so that your people everywhere may enjoy religious freedom, security, and peace. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Let us pray, dear friends, that God the almighty Father may heal the sick, comfort the dying, give safety to travellers, free those unjustly deprived of liberty, and rid the world of falsehood, hunger and disease.

Almighty ever-living God, you give strength to the weak and new courage to those who have lost heart. Hear the prayers of all who call on you in any trouble that they may have the joy of receiving your help in their need. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Veneration of the Cross

The “Reproaches” should not be sung, as they may be perceived to be anti-semitic. Psalm 22 is one of many alternatives that may be used, together with other antiphons given in the sacramentary.

Patrick Regan explains the importance of using a cross instead of a crucifix for the veneration.

The liturgy of Good Friday culminates for most Catholics in their coming forward to devoutly kiss the figure of Christ nailed to the cross. Yet they are summoned to this gesture by the invitatory, 'This is the wood of the cross. Come, let us worship.' Moreover, the sacramentary entitles this portion of the service 'Veneration of the Cross.' The object to be reverenced is not a carved or molded representation of Christ crucified, but the cross; more specifically, a fragment of the true cross. A look at the origin and development of the rite will confirm this view. It should also acquaint us with a theological interpretation of sufficient richness to persuade us that veneration of a cross rather than a crucifix on Good Friday is not only historically more correct, but pastorally more fruitful.

That the instrument of Christ's death should be esteemed worthy of worship is due largely to the passion narrative in John's gospel, which, of course, is the Passion proclaimed on Good Friday. Our understanding of the veneration of the cross, therefore, will grow in proportion to our grasp of John's unique viewpoint. For this evangelist, Jesus' going up to the cross is his return to the Father and entrance into glory. It is what other New Testament authors call his ascension into heaven. On the cross Christ banishes the prince of this world and inaugurates his reign as universal king. Now lifted up from the earth, he pours forth his Spirit and begins to draw every-
thing to himself, making it serve the divinely intended purpose of revealing him as Lord. As the first Preface of the Passion phrases it, 'The power of the cross reveals your judgment on this world and the kingship of Christ crucified.'

The cross, then, is a sign of conquest and triumph.2

The rubrics are clear in calling for a cross rather than a crucifix.

Holy Communion

The service of communion, whose desirability is widely debated, will be quiet and simple. After communion we pray as follows:

Almighty and eternal God,
you have restored us to life
by the triumphant death and resurrection of Christ.
Continue this healing work within us.
May we who participate in this mystery
never cease to serve you.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

At the end of the liturgy the following prayer over the people is said:

Lord,
send down your abundant blessing upon your people
who have devoutly recalled the death of your Son
in the sure hope of the resurrection.
Grant them pardon; bring them comfort.
May their faith grow stronger
and their eternal salvation be assured.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.2

2 Patrick Regan, "Restoring the Cross to Good Friday," Liturgy (Washington, DC) 1 (1981) 55-59
The vigil is a time of waiting, hence it takes some time and is never rushed. In addition, it takes place at night. The Congregation of Divine Worship tells us:

According to a most ancient tradition, this night is 'one of vigil for the Lord,' and the vigil celebrated during it to commemorate that holy night when the Lord rose from the dead is regarded as the 'mother of all holy vigils.' For in that night the church keeps vigil, waiting for the resurrection of the Lord, and celebrates the sacraments of Christian initiation. (n. 77)

The entire celebration of the Easter Vigil takes place at night. It should not begin before nightfall; it should end before daybreak on Sunday. This rule is to be taken according to its strictest sense. Reprehensible are those abuses and practices which have crept in many places in violation of this ruling, whereby the Easter Vigil is celebrated at the time of day that it is customary to celebrate anticipated Sunday Masses. (n. 78)

The full meaning of vigil is a waiting for the coming of the Lord. (n. 80)

Gail Ramshaw provides us with a wonderful vision of this liturgy:

The third Great Day is the metaphoric jewel. What do Christians do until Christ comes again? We assemble in the dark of the world; we hear the metaphors of the faith; we baptize; and we commune. So the Great Vigil. Not supported by the unambiguous bright sun and yellow daffodils, but more symbolically accurate of our resurrection faith, we assemble in the night. We light a candle in the darkness, a light we metaphorically laud as if it were Christ. We read four or seven or twelve readings, not as a Reader's Digest condensed version of Bible history, but as the primary metaphors of the resurrection. God creates light; Isaac is saved; the people of Israel escape; Lady Wisdom reigns.

This is the night of salvation, we say, as do pious Jews who on every passover night are rescued from slavery. Metaphor says several different things at the same time. So at the paschal vigil we are Israel escaping, and the disciples rejoicing, and the church cele-

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1 Congregation for Divine Worship, Preparing and Celebrating the Paschal Feasts, 16 January 1988
brating. We are not waiting for Jesus to rise from the dead; this would be a fake and induced emotion. The vigil makes no reference to mourners at a tomb, for we have gathered because we are already the community of the resurrection. We are Israel saved, the church recreated, ritualizing the metaphors of our identity.²

The sacramentary explains that the night vigil has four main parts:

• a brief service of light;

• the liturgy of the word, when the Church meditates on all the wonderful things God has done for his people from the beginning;

• the liturgy of baptism, when new members of the Church are reborn as the day of resurrection approaches; and

• the liturgy of the eucharist, when the Church is called to the table which the Lord has prepared for his people through his death and resurrection.

Blessing of the Fire and Lighting of the Candle

The first text is an invitation to the vigil liturgy as a whole:

Dear friends in Christ,
on this most holy night,
when our Lord Jesus Christ passed from death to life,
the Church invites her children throughout the world
to come together in vigil and prayer.
This is the passover of the Lord:
if we honor the memory of his death and resurrection
by hearing his word and celebrating his mysteries,
then we may be confident
that we shall share his victory over death
and live with him for ever in God.

The fire is then lit and the candle is prepared.

Father,
we share in the light of your glory
through your Son, the light of the world.
Make this new fire holy, and inflame us with new hope.
Purify our minds by this Easter celebration
and bring us one day to the feast of eternal light.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Christ yesterday and today
the beginning and the end
Alpha
and Omega
all time belongs to him
and all the ages
to him be glory and power
through every age for ever. Amen.

or

By his holy
and glorious wounds
may Christ our Lord
guard us
and keep us. Amen.

May the light of Christ, rising in glory,
dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds.

During the procession we sing:

Christ our light.
Thanks be to God.

Easter Proclamation

This marvellous song deserves extended study and meditation. A few notes on its structure are offered here. It should be sung by a very good singer.

The Exultet has two parts: an introduction or invitation, and the prayer of thanks and praise proper; the latter begins with the customary preface dialogue.

The introduction has three parts, followed by the deacon's request for our prayers. We call out to all of heaven and earth, inviting them to join us in our great prayer. The character of this section is indicated by the fact that each sentence or acclamation is punctuated with an exclamation mark!

In the first part we, in essence, order the angels and cherubim and other inhabitants of heaven to rejoice with us:

Rejoice, O heavenly powers!
Sing, choirs of angels!
Exult, all creation around God's throne!
Jesus Christ, our King, is risen!
Sound the trumpet of salvation!
We then address a similar notice of the resurrection to all of earthly creation:

Rejoice, O earth, in shining splendor,
radiant in the brightness of your King!
Christ has conquered!
Glory fills you!
Darkness vanishes for ever!

Finally, we invite the whole church, and in particular the church gathered in this place, to rejoice and praise God:

Rejoice, O Mother Church!
Exult in glory! The risen Savior shines upon you!
Let this place resound with joy,
echoing the mighty song of all God’s people!

The deacon’s prayer follows:

My dearest friends, standing with me in this holy light,
join me in asking God for mercy,
that he may give his unworthy minister
grace to sing his Easter praises.

Part two begins with the preface dialogue:

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

The first section is something of an overview: we address our prayer to God, speak of what Christ has done, and name the feast.

It is truly right that with full hearts and minds and voices we should praise the unseen God, the all-powerful Father, and his only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.
For Christ has ransomed us with his blood, and paid for us the price of Adam’s sin to our eternal Father.
This is our passover feast, when Christ, the true Lamb is slain, whose blood consecrates the homes of all believers.

The song then four times proclaims: “This is the night...”

This is the night when first you saved our [ancestors]: you freed the people of Israel from their slavery and led them dryshod through the sea.
This is the night when the pillar of fire destroyed the darkness of sin!
This is the night when Christians everywhere, washed clean of sin and freed from all defilement, are restored to grace and grow together in holiness.
This is the night when Jesus Christ broke the chains of death and rose triumphant from the grave.

The following several verses respond to and reflect upon what we have just sung:

What good would life have been to us, had Christ not come as our Redeemer?
Father, how wonderful your care for us! How boundless your merciful love!
To ransom a slave you gave away your Son.
O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!

Four more verses speak again of the character of this night:

Most blessed of all nights, chosen by God to see Christ rising from the dead!
Of this night scripture says: “The night will be as clear as day: it will become my light, my joy.”
The power of this holy night dispels all evil, washes guilt away, restores lost innocence, brings mourners joy; it casts out hatred, brings us peace, and humbles earthly pride.
Night truly blessed when heaven is wedded to earth, and [humanity] is reconciled with God!

The song now turns from praise to petition. We ask first that God receive our prayer, which is described as “our evening sacrifice of praise.”

Therefore, heavenly Father, in the joy of this night, receive our evening sacrifice of praise, your Church's solemn offering.

Then come three prayers having to do with the Easter candle. The third refers as well to Christ as the morning star, a light that never sets. This leads to a concluding doxology and Amen.

Accept this Easter candle, a flame divided but undimmed, a pillar of fire that glows to the honor of God.
Let it mingle with the lights of heaven and continue bravely burning to dispel the darkness of this night!
May the Morning Star which never sets find this flame still burning: Christ, that Morning Star, who came back from the dead, and shed his peaceful light on all [humankind], your Son who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.
Liturgy of the Word

The presider first extends an invitation:

Dear friends in Christ,
we have begun our solemn vigil.
Let us now listen attentively to the word of God,
recalling how he saved his people throughout history
and, in the fullness of time,
sent his own Son to be our Redeemer.

Through this Easter celebration,
may God bring to perfection
the saving work he has begun in us.

Readings

The Introduction to the Lectionary tells us:

On the holy night of the Easter Vigil there are seven Old Testament
readings, recalling the wonderful works of God in the history of sal-
vation. There are two new Testament readings, the announcement
of the resurrection according to one of the Synoptic Gospels and a
reading from St Paul on Christian baptism as the sacrament of
Christ's resurrection. (n. 99)

After each reading we are invited to pray, given a moment to pray in silence,
and join in a prayer enunciated by the presider. Both the readings and prayers
invite our reflection.

Genesis 1:1 – 2:2. God saw all he had made, and indeed it was good.

Almighty and eternal God,
you created all things in wonderful beauty and order,
Help us now to perceive
how still more wonderful is the new creation
by which in the fullness of time
you redeemed your people
through the sacrifice of our passover, Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.


God and Father of all who believe in you,
you promised Abraham
that he would become the father of all nations,
and through the death and resurrection of Christ
you fulfill that promise:
everywhere throughout the world
you increase your chosen people.
May we respond to your call
by joyfully accepting your invitation  
to the new life of grace.  
We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.

Exodus 14:15 – 15:1. Tell the children of Israel to march on, to walk  
through the sea on dry ground.

Father,  
even today we see the wonders  
of the miracles you worked long ago.  
You once saved a single nation  
from slavery,  
and now you offer that salvation to all through baptism.  
May the peoples of the world  
become true children of Abraham  
and prove worthy of the heritage of Israel.  
Grant this through Christ our Lord.

Isaiah 54:5-14. But with everlasting love I have taken pity on you,  
says the Lord, your redeemer.

Almighty and eternal God,  
glorify your name by increasing your chosen people  
as you promised long ago.  
In reward for their trust,  
may we see in the Church the fulfillment of your promise.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Isaiah 55:1-11. Come to me and your soul will live. With you I will  
make an everlasting covenant.

Almighty, ever-living God,  
only hope of the world,  
by the preaching of the prophets  
you proclaimed the mysteries we are celebrating tonight.  
Help us to be your faithful people,  
for it is by your inspiration alone  
that we can grow in goodness.  
Grant this in the name of Jesus the Lord.

Baruch 3:9-15, 32 – 4:4. Walk in the way of God and you will live in  
peace for ever.

Father,  
you increase your church  
by continuing to call all people to salvation.  
Listen to our prayers  
and always watch over those you cleanse in baptism.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Ezekiel 36:16-17, 18-28. I shall pour clean water over you and I shall give you a new heart.

Father,
you teach us in both the Old and the New Testament to celebrate this passover mystery.
Help us to understand your great love for us.
May the goodness you now show us confirm our hope in your future mercy.
We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.

The opening prayer precedes the next reading, which is the epistle:

Lord God,
you have brightened this night with the radiance of the risen Christ.
Quicken the spirit of sonship in your Church;
renew us in mind and body
to give you whole-hearted service.
Grant this....

Romans 6:3-11. Christ, having been raised from the dead, will never die again.

The gospels tell of the discovery of the empty tomb by the faithful women. The three synoptic accounts are used in turn in successive years. The gospel acclamation restores, with great joy, the alleluia to our celebrations.

A: Matthew 28:1-10. He has risen from the dead and now he is going before you to Galilee.
B: Mark 16:1-8. Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, has risen.

The liturgy of baptism and renewal of baptismal promises, and the liturgy of the eucharist, follow. These have received ample comment in previous issues of the Bulletin. The preface and solemn blessing are noteworthy, however.

Preface for Easter I

Father, all-powerful and ever-living God,
we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We praise you with greater joy than ever on this Easter night, when Christ became our paschal sacrifice.
He is the true Lamb who took away the sins of the world.
By dying he destroyed our death; by rising he restored our life.
And so, with all the choirs of angels in heaven
we proclaim your glory
and join in their unending hymn of praise.

**Solemn Blessing**

May almighty God bless you on this solemn feast of Easter,
and may he protect you against all sin. Amen.

Through the resurrection of his Son,
God has granted us healing.
May he fulfill his promises,
and bless you with eternal life. Amen.

You have mourned for Christ's sufferings;
now you celebrate the joy of his resurrection.
May you come with joy to the feast which lasts for ever. Amen.

May almighty God bless you,
Easter Sunday

The day of Easter Sunday is provided with three major liturgies: the morning eucharist, an afternoon eucharist, and evening prayer (vespers). We are most aware of the morning eucharist because its texts are given in full in the sacramentary.

In addition to its own readings and prayers, the morning eucharist includes two special elements: the renewal of baptismal promises, and a sequence (a hymn) in addition to the gospel acclamation.

Readings:

Acts 10:34, 37-43. We have eaten and drunk with him after his resurrection from the dead.

Psalm 117. This day was made by the Lord; we rejoice and are glad.

Colossians 3:1-4. Look for the things that are in heaven, where Christ is.

or

1 Corinthians 5:6-8. Throw away the old yeast, that you may be new dough.

John 20:1-9. The teaching of scripture is that he must rise from the dead.

The gospel from the Easter Vigil may be read instead.

Sequence

1. Christians, praise the paschal victim!
   Offer thankful sacrifice!

2. Christ the Lamb has saved the sheep,
   Christ the just one paid the price,
   Reconciling sinners to the Father.

3. Death and life fought bitterly
   For this wondrous victory;
   The Lord of life who died reigns glorified!

4. O Mary, come and say
   what you saw at break of day.
5. "The empty tomb of my living Lord!
I saw Christ Jesus risen and adored!"

6. Bright angels testified,
Shroud and grave clothes side by side!

7. "Yes, Christ my hope rose gloriously.
He goes before you into Galilee."

8. Share the good news, sing joyfully:
His death is victory!
Lord Jesus, Victor King, show us mercy.

Opening Prayer
God our Father,
by raising Christ your Son
you conquered the power of death
and opened for us the way to eternal life.
Let our celebration today
raise us up and renew our lives
by the Spirit that is within us.
Grant this....

Alternative Opening Prayer
Let us pray
on this Easter morning for the life
that never again shall see darkness.

God our Father, creator of all
today is the day of Easter joy.
This is the morning on which the Lord appeared to men
who had begun to lose hope
and opened their eyes to what the scriptures foretold:
that first he must die, and then he would rise
and ascend into his Father's glorious presence.

May the risen Lord
breathe on our minds and open our eyes
that we may know him in the breaking of bread,
and follow him in his risen life.
Grant this through Christ our Lord.

Afternoon Eucharist
The possibility of an afternoon eucharist is suggested by the lectionary, which offers the possibility of reading the story of the journey to Emmaus as the gospel. (The Lutheran Book of Worship provides a full set of texts, including the Emmaus gospel, for such an "Easter eve" celebration.) It would seem appropriate to include a procession of some kind leading up to this liturgy.

Victimae paschali laudes, ascribed to Wipo of Burgundy, d. 1048; translation: © Peter J. Scagnelli, b. 1949.
Evening Prayer

The Great Three Days may fittingly come to their conclusion with the celebration of evening prayer or vespers. In some places this includes a procession to the baptismal font.

The antiphons tell the Easter story:

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the Lord's tomb, alleluia.

Come and see the place where the Lord was buried, alleluia.

Jesus said: Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to set out for Galilee; there they will see me, alleluia.

On the evening of the first day of the week, the disciples were gathered together behind locked doors; suddenly, Jesus stood among them and said: Peace be with you, alleluia.

This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad, alleluia.

The canticle concludes by singing:

Alleluia.
The wedding feast of the Lamb has begun,
Alleluia.
and his bride is prepared to welcome him.
Alleluia, alleluia.

The final rubric notes: "The Easter Triduum ends with the conclusion of Evening Prayer."
The Paschal Fast and Other Liturgies

Even as we work hard to prepare the major liturgies of the Triduum we need also to consider other liturgies, private prayer and prayer in households, and the other spaces in between these activities. The whole three days is for worship and celebration, meditation and contemplation. We do not have “time out” periods.

The interspersing of times of focused major celebration and of times of relative quiet, give rhythm to the three days, however. And if the Easter Vigil is the climax of the feast, that does not make the other liturgies or the quieter times unimportant or dispensable.

The Paschal Fast

An important element of the triduum that is central yet entirely silent in character, is the paschal fast on Friday and Saturday. The Congregation for Divine Worship explains:

The Easter fast is sacred on the first two days of the Triduum, in which according to ancient tradition the church fasts “because the Spouse has been taken away.” Good Friday is a day of fasting and abstinence; it is also recommended that Holy Saturday be so observed so that the Church, with uplifted and welcoming heart, be ready to celebrate the joys of the Sunday of the resurrection. (n. 38)

Gabe Huck writes eloquently regarding the paschal fast:

As early as the second century, there was baptizing on the Christians’ Passover and there was fasting in preparation for that. In many places this became a two-day fast. That is the ancient origin of our Triduum.

Especially in that the longer period of Lent is now kept with a variety of disciplines from place to place and individual to individual, this common fast becomes important, as it was in the first development of the Triduum, for defining Friday and Saturday. Note that this is the “Easter fast,” the Passover fast. The attention of the parish staff as well as the liturgy planners belongs on this fast as

1 Preparing and Celebrating the Paschal Feasts, by the Congregation for Divine Worship, 16 January 1988
the preparation for the Easter liturgy. It is within this fast that the church may gather to pray on Friday and Saturday. For that to happen, there needs to be more than a bulletin reminder that Good Friday is a day of fast and abstinence. There should be an awareness of fasting throughout Lent: on the death/resurrection that fasting can symbolize, in the discipline it brings and in the sharing of earth's resources that it makes possible.

We have much to overcome in our culture. Even when we fasted under the old rules of Lent, we ate better than much of the world. Now we have seen something of the many uses of fasting through the world's religions and cultures and we know far more of the world's hunger. When fasting becomes again a common bond in the days of Lent, we will have something to build the Easter fast upon and something to contrast it with. ...

In Lent's fast and in the Easter fast we enter into the liberating work of Jesus. The Easter fast, because of the proximity of that liberation in the liturgy of baptism, has something more to it: (here he quotes James Field)

There is a time in every human life when we turn from food because we are so filled with something else. Perhaps we are in mourning, or in love, or writing an article, or painting a picture, or reading a wonderful novel. We fast because we are no longer hungry, but are utterly filled with something else. The paschal fast is being so filled with God that nothing else counts, and other things could only distract.

(Huck resumes:) As the final stages of the catechumenate become more and more a part of the life cycle of every parish, this too will be important in the fast for the church is fasting: the order of those baptized is fasting with the order of the catechumens as they enter the final struggle to receive baptism into the death of Jesus. This fast unites the whole church, catechumens and baptized: it unites those who attend the liturgies of the Triduum and those who do not. Within a parish, the definition of the fasting might be given along with suggestions for a more strict fast, and real encouragement to continue the fast through Saturday. Saturday is, in fact, the original day for this fast, and more in keeping with the near-universal human practice of fasting in preparation for a great festival: this fasting is "foregoing all nourishment but God's presence."

The fasting on Saturday is only encouraged, not commanded, in the Church documents. This may reflect the time when the lenten fast ended on Saturday noon. At any rate, a parish community can promote the idea that here is a little church in prayer and fasting through these two days, solidarity felt in the prayer, the hunger and the anticipation shared by catechumens and baptized as the vigil comes closer.

This need not mean a return to rules and so loopholes. Parish staff, catechumens, sponsors and others could commit themselves to the very strict fast the early church knew on these days (probably taking nothing at all to eat). Others would be encouraged to join in this to
the best of their ability. Anything as loose as our American notion of the church's fast (one big meal and two small ones) would seem unworthy of the name.²

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**Morning Prayer and Devotions**

The Congregation for Divine Worship³ makes the following suggestions:

It is recommended that on this day [Good Friday] the office of readings and morning prayer be celebrated with the participation of the people in the churches. (n. 62)

It is highly recommended that on this day [Holy Saturday] the office of readings and morning prayer be celebrated with the participation of the people. Where this cannot be done, there should be some celebration of the word of God or some act of devotion suited to the mystery celebrated this day. (n. 73)

Devotions, such as the Way of the Cross, processions of the Passion and commemorations of the sorrow of the Blessed Virgin Mary, are not, for pastoral reasons, to be neglected. The texts and songs used, however, should be adapted to the spirit of the liturgy of this day [Good Friday]. Such devotions should be assigned to a time of day that makes it quite clear that the liturgical celebration by its very nature far surpasses them in importance. (n. 72)

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**Liturgies of the RCIA**

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* suggests (but does not require) what are called "Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday." A model for such a celebration is provided; it includes an opening song, greeting, reading of the word of God, homily, celebration of one or more rites (see below), and a conclusion.

Among the rites suggested for Holy Saturday (but which might well be celebrated at some other time instead) are:

- recitation of the creed
- ephphetha rite
- choosing a baptismal name
- anointing with the oil of catechumens.

The rites provided in the ritual book are suggestions and models. They may be adapted, either for elect or for celebration by the baptized, or both.

Gabe Huck's *The Three Days* contains many other suggestions for additional liturgies, devotions and prayer in households.⁴₀

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³ Preparing and Celebrating the Paschal Feasts, by the Congregation for Divine Worship, 16 (January 1988)
The Third Progress Report on the Revision of the Roman Missal was recently published by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy [ICEL], the body that currently is undertaking a revision of the sacramentary on behalf of the episcopal conferences of countries where English is an important liturgical language. The revised texts are expected to be ready in 1994.

The Third Progress Report tells us about some proposed revisions in texts for the Order of Mass, texts such as the Glory to God and Creeds, prefaces, eucharistic prayers, and solemn blessings. In addition, it gives examples of some proposed new texts, composed in English, for the order of mass as well as prefaces and solemn blessings. Finally, it presents a proposed pastoral introduction to the Order of Mass.

The following examples of proposed revisions are quoted from this report.

### Proposed New Translations

**Conclusion to the first and second readings.** Present text:

"This is the Word of the Lord."

Proposed:

"The word of the Lord."

The conclusion to the readings was revised for the following reasons: [1] to translate the Latin as other modern languages do, [2] to maintain the parallel to the distribution formula for communion, [3] to counter the tendency evoked by "This is..." to make the acclamation the equivalent of a narrow "pointing gesture" rather than a faith acclamation to God who speaks when the Scriptures are read.

**Invitation and Response before the Prayer over the Gifts.** Present text:

Pray, brethren, that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good, and the good of all his Church.
Proposed revision:

Brothers and sisters in Christ, 
pray that our sacrifice will be pleasing to God.
For the glory of God's name, 
the good of the Church, 
and the salvation of all the world.

The primary concerns of the revisers were to avoid anticipating the language of sacrifice and offering at this point in the rite, to overcome the distancing of presider and assembly, and to make the language more inclusive. The English revision is inspired by the French version: Prions ensemble, au moment d'offrir le sacrifice de toute l'Église. / Pour la gloire de Dieu et le salut du monde.

Invitation to communion. Present text:

This is the lamb of God 
who takes away the sins of the world. 
Happy are those who are called to his supper.

Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, 
but only say the word and I shall be healed.

Proposed revision:

Behold the lamb of God, 
who takes away the sin of the world. 
Blessed are those called to the banquet of the lamb.

Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, 
but only say the word and I shall be healed.

The revised text employs more heightened speech: “Blessed” and “to the banquet of the lamb” replace “Happy” and “to his supper” of the current ICEL text, and, in order to echo the familiar biblical phrasing, “Behold” is used instead of “This is.” Because it is a memorized text, the people’s response “Lord, I am not worthy” was left unchanged.

Preface for Christmas III. Present text:

Father, all-powerful and ever-living God, 
we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Today in him a new light has dawned upon the world: 
God has become one with man, and man has become one again with God.

Your eternal word has taken upon himself our human weakness, giving our mortal nature immortal value.
So marvelous is this oneness between God and man that in Christ man restores to man the gift of everlasting life. In our joy we sing to your glory with all the choirs of angels.

Proposed revision:

It is truly right and just that earth unite with heaven in praising you, almighty God, king of endless glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Through him the wonderful exchange that brings our redemption is revealed this day in all its splendor. When your eternal Word assumes human frailty, our mortal nature takes on immortal value and the marvelous union between God and ourselves makes us sharers in eternal life.

And so, we join the multitude of angels in their joyful chorus of praise:

Preface 44: The Annunciation of the Lord. Present text:

Father, all-powerful and ever-living God, we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks through Jesus Christ our Lord.

He came to save mankind by becoming a man himself. The Virgin Mary, receiving the angels' message in faith, conceived by the power of the Spirit and bore your Son in purest love.

In Christ, the eternal truth, your promise to Israel came true. In Christ, the hope of all peoples, man's hope was realized beyond all expectation.

Through Christ the angels of heaven offer their prayer of adoration as they rejoice in your presence for ever. May our voices be one with theirs in their triumphant hymn of praise:

Proposed revision:

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, that in all things we should give you thanks, eternal God, and at all times proclaim your mighty deeds, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
The Virgin Mary received with faith the angel's message that the power of the Holy Spirit would overshadow her and that a child would be born among us for our salvation.

She bore him in her womb with purest love that your promises to Israel might be fulfilled and the hope of nations realized beyond all telling.

Through Christ, the hosts of angels adore you and rejoice in your presence for ever. May our voices join with theirs in the triumphant chorus of praise:

**Solemn Blessing: Advent.** Present text:

You believe that the Son of God once came to us; you look for him to come again. May his coming bring you the light of his holiness and free you with his blessing.

Amen.

May God make you steadfast in faith, joyful in hope, and untiring in love all the days of your life.

Amen.

You rejoice that our Redeemer came to live with us as man. When he comes again in glory, may he reward you with endless life.

Amen.

May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Proposed revision:

We rejoice at the coming of the Savior in our flesh, and we await his return again in glory.

May God the almighty and merciful bless you by the light of Christ's coming and enrich your lives with every grace.

Amen.

May God make you steadfast in faith, joyful in hope, and untiring in love all the days of your life.

Amen.

May God reward you with eternal life when our Redeemer comes again in glory.

Amen.

May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.
Solemn Blessing: Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday. Present text:

May almighty God bless you on this solemn feast of Easter and may he protect you against all sin.
Amen.

Through the resurrection of his Son God has granted us healing.
May he fulfill his promises, and bless you with eternal life.
Amen.

You have mourned for Christ's sufferings; now you celebrate the joy of his resurrection.
May you come with joy to the feast which lasts for ever.
Amen.

May almighty God...

Proposed revision:

On this solemn feast of Easter, having followed the Lord Jesus in his suffering, we celebrate the joy of his resurrection.

May God the almighty bless you and mercifully protect you from the peril of sin.
Amen.

May the God who restores you to eternal life in the resurrection of Christ complete in you the gift of immortality.
Amen.

Through the grace of Christ may God lead you to the banquet of lasting joy.
Amen.

May almighty God...

Original Texts

Invitation to the Gloria. Proposed texts:

A Let us sing the praises of the Lord, the God who made us, whose glory is from age to age:

B With all the voices of heaven, let us sing praise and honor and glory to God:
Sign of Peace Invitation. Proposed alternative texts:

A  As children of the God of peace, let us offer one another a sign of reconciliation and peace.

B  Brothers and sisters, let us offer one another the peace of the risen Christ.

Invitation to Communion. Proposed alternative texts:

A  This is the bread come down from heaven: whoever eats of it will never die. This is the cup of eternal life: whoever drinks of it will live for ever.

B  God's holy gifts for God's holy people: draw near to receive them with praise and thanksgiving.

Preface. Sundays in Ordinary Time

It is truly right and just our duty and our salvation always and everywhere to give you thanks, God of majesty and loving kindness.

From sunrise to sunset this day is holy, for Christ has arisen upon us today and scattered the darkness of death with light and life that will not fade. This day the risen Lord assembles us, unfolds for us your word, and breaks for us the bread of life. And though the night will bring this Sunday to a close you call us to live in endless light, the never-ending Day of the Lord.

And so, with the choirs of angels, with all the heavenly host, we proclaim your glory and join their unending hymn of praise:

Pastoral Introduction: Order of Mass

The revised Missal will contain some further introductory materials beyond those that appeared in the ICEl edition of 1973. The major portion of these pastoral introductions will address the Order of Mass. Other, briefer introductions will precede each section of the Missal, for example, the Proper of Seasons and the individual seasons, the Commons, and the Sanctoral. In the
Second Progress Report on the Revision of the Roman Missal samples were given of the introductions being developed for the Proper of Seasons and the Order of Mass. In this third progress report, a further sample is given of the introduction for the Order of Mass, in this case the general introductory section. Although not yet in final form, this sample should serve to illustrate the approach being taken and the content being developed.

Proposed Contents:

I. The Celebration of Mass

The Assembly and Its Ministers

Assembly
Liturgical Ministers
Priest Celebrant
Deacon
Reader
Ministers of the Eucharist
Servers
Ministers of Music
Ushers

The Eucharistic Celebration and its Symbols

Gesture and Posture
Posture
Other Postures and Gestures

Words
Sacred Scripture
Presidential Prayers
Common Prayers and Other Texts
Sung Texts
Invitations and Introductions
Private Prayers

Music

Silence

Materials and Object
Bread and wine
Vessels
Altar
Ambo
Chair
Cross
Books
Vesture
Incense

Adapting the Celebration to Particular Circumstances

A few sample sections are quoted here.
Assembly

5 Christ is always present in the Church, particularly in its liturgical celebrations. In the celebration of Mass, which is a memorial of the sacrifice of the cross, Christ is really present first of all in the assembly itself: "Where two or three come together in my name, there am I in their midst" (Matthew 18:20). At Mass the faithful form "a holy people, a chosen people, a royal priesthood: they give thanks to God and offer the Victim not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him and learn to offer themselves. They should endeavour to make this clear by their deep sense of reverence for God and their charity toward sisters and brothers who share with them in the celebration." [General Instruction, 62]

6 The assembly is not a random group of individuals but the gathering of God's people to exercise its royal priesthood in the sacrifice of praise. Everything in the celebration is organized to encourage and foster an awareness of mutual interdependence, of common dignity and purpose.

- The dialogues between the assembly and its ministers and the acclamations have a special value as signs of communal action and as means of effective communication.

- Singing is one of the most potent of all expressions of communal awareness and common purpose.

- Uniformity in posture and gesture likewise expresses and fosters a unity of spirit and purpose.

Priest Celebrant

13 In the celebration of the eucharist, Christ is also present in the person of the presiding minister. Every authentic celebration of the eucharist is presided over by the bishop in person or, in most assemblies, by a presbyter. In presiding over the celebration, in listening and responding to God's word, and in offering sacrifice through Christ in the Spirit to the Father, the priest leads the people in prayer. He proclaims the message of salvation in preaching and gives them the bread and cup of salvation.

14 By the depth of the priest's prayerfulness and the dignity and humility of his bearing, the people should be able to recognize the living presence of Christ, who spoke with authority but as one who came not to be served but to serve. In this way the priest will be conscious that he presides in the assembly in the name of Christ and that his presidency is exercised in a ritual manner.

- Through his liturgical presidency, the priest encourages the participation of others and coordinates them into one harmonious action. Rather than appropriating the functions of others, he is responsible to see that everything is done well.

- The priest exercises his responsibility chiefly in the proclamation of the presidential prayers: the opening prayer, the prayer over the gifts, the prayer after communion, and, supremely, the eucharistic prayer. Presiding in the person of Christ, he addresses these prayers to God in the name not only of the assembly but of the entire people of God.
• In some circumstances the priest may also facilitate the conscious participation of the assembly by brief and helpful comments and introductions, for example, at the beginning of the celebration, before the readings and the eucharistic prayer, or at the dismissal.

• The readings are proclaimed by other ministers, but the homily is ordinarily given by the presiding priest. Preaching is an integral part of the liturgy, particularly when the community gathers for its Sunday celebration of the eucharist.

Ministers of Music

22 A psalmist, a cantor, an organist, other instrumentalists, a choir, and a director of music assist the assembly's full participation in singing the songs, responses, and acclamations. These ministers of music exercise a liturgical function within the assembly and by their role help to add beauty and solemnity to the celebration.

• The psalmist has the special task of drawing the assembly into the proclamation of the word of God in the psalm by introducing the psalm responses, alleluia or gospel acclamation to the assembly, and by singing the verses of the responsorial psalm and the alleluia and gospel verses. The psalmist may also introduce antiphons to the assembly and sing the verses of the psalms used. The role of the psalmist and cantor may be carried out by one person.

• The cantor's function is to lead and encourage the assembly in singing, not to sing in place of the assembly. It is a function of the cantor to introduce and teach new music to the people.

• The organ and other instruments not only support and encourage participation through song, but in their own right can powerfully assist contemplation and express praise and a variety of human feelings before God.

• The choir remains at all times a part of the assembly. It can serve the assembly by leading it in sung prayer and by reinforcing or enhancing the song of the assembly, for example, by sharing the singing of the verses or sections of a hymn or song alternately, by introducing a sung response or antiphon, or through harmony or other elaboration. Occasionally it will be appropriate for the choir alone to sing more elaborate music, for example, an anthem, which can assist the prayerful reflection of the assembly. It should never dominate, displace, or compete with the assembly.

• Even at celebrations when there is no choir, basic musical participation can be ensured by an instrumentalist and one or more cantors, or by a cantor alone. Especially through responsorial singing, such ministers can draw the people into singing together.
Book Review: Jewish Prayer


This is an excellent book. It is highly recommended to all liturgists, teachers and students. It provides a clear, sympathetic and prayerful introduction to the liturgy of contemporary and historic Judaism, and shows the many ways in which Christian worship is rooted in Jewish liturgy.

The author is an Italian presbyter, and theologian with the Service International de Documentation Judéo-Chrétienne, a work of the Sisters of Sion in Rome. He was formerly a professor of theology at the Theological Institute of Assisi. He has studied liturgical theology at the Liturgical Institute of San Anselmo in Rome.

Part of the table of contents is given here:

- Introduction: The Rediscovery of Judaism
- Chapter 1. The Sources of the Jewish Liturgy
  - Information in the New Testament
  - Sources in the Mishnah
  - The Siddur or Prayer Book
- Chapter 2. The Structure of the Jewish Liturgy
  - The Importance and Meaning of the Berakah
  - The First Structural Unit: The Shema' Yisra'el
  - The Second Structural Unit: The Tefillah
  - The Third Structural Unit: The Qeri'at Torah
- Chapter 3. Private and Communal Phases of Jewish Prayer
  - Benedictions by Individuals
  - The Domestic Liturgy
  - The Liturgy of the Synagogue
- Chapter 4. The Celebration of Feasts
  - The Pilgrimage Feasts
  - The Austere Feasts
  - The Minor Feasts
- Conclusion: From Ignorance to Understanding and Cooperation

A few quotations from the Conclusion:

If we allow the Jewish liturgical texts to speak and if we yield to their poetic beauty and, more importantly, their interior spiritual movement, we see how surprisingly relevant and close to us they are. What Christian can fail to hear his or her own voice in the
berekot, the tefillah, the reading and commentary on the Torah, the sabbath qiddush, the havdalah, the dayyenu, the nishmat kol hay ("the breath of every living thing"), and in the spirituality of pesach, shavu'ot, sukkot, rosh hashanah, yom kippur, and so on? What Christian can fail to find therein expressions of the trust and abandonment of Jesus to his Father? (p. 227)

How can the ekklesia be understood apart from the synagogue, the liturgy of the word apart from the geri'at Torah, the Eucharistic Prayer apart from the berakah, the cycle of readings apart from the parashot and haftarot, baptism apart from the miqweh, the supper apart from the birkat ha-mazon, Easter apart from pesah, Pentecost apart from shavu'ot, Sunday apart from shabbat, the divine office part from the tehillim (hymns and psalms), conversion apart from teshuvah, Lent apart from yom kippur, liturgical translations apart from the targumim, the homily apart from the midrashim, and so on? (p. 227)

Christians must change their mental outlook in two ways by realizing that the Jewish liturgy is not something purely of the past and that in the Jewish liturgy the worshippers pray to the same God as we do and on behalf of the same cause. (pp. 228-9)

To be familiar with the Jewish liturgy is not only to add to one's store of historical and cultural lore; it is, above all, to enter into the praying soul of the Jewish people as down the centuries it raises its voice in praise and invocation of the God who is also the God of Jesus and of Christians, the one God of all humankind and all religions. (p. 229)

It is certainly at this level that these "sisters," the Jewish liturgy and the Christian liturgy, find themselves in closest contact and harmony: both proclaim the reign of God, both proclaim and sanctify his Name, both praise and thank him and appeal for his coming. The qedushat ha-shem, or sanctification of the Name, is the very heart of both the Jewish and the Christian liturgy: it is the point at which the two convened peoples meet and may be seen to be alike. (p. 230)
Brief Book Notices


The number of books that offer reflections on the daily or Sunday lectionary texts is increasing as the above lists demonstrates. Above are a few editions that readers and homilists may find helpful and which offer material for pondering. Hopefully, such materials will spark imaginations rather than encourage disuse of the mind.


Designed for the computer age, this slightly different book comes with a permission for reprinting in parish bulletins. Although designed to be reproduced in bulletins, its main purpose is to offer a reflection for each Sunday gospel.


With the study of liturgy becoming more common, it is important to provide a basic introductory text for students that is up-to-date and comprehensive without being too unwieldy. This may be it. Adolf Adam, noted for The Liturgical Year, provides an excellent introduction to the history and practice of liturgy in one volume under four hundred pages. This work is divided into two sections. Part I deals with liturgy in general: the nature, history, science of liturgy, the assembly as a process of communication, music, popular piety and ecumenism; and Part II with individual celebrations.


In an earlier age reconciliation was restricted to a once-in-a-lifetime celebration. Over the ages this practice has changed. However, in our own time reconciliation may again become a once-in-a-lifetime celebration! The author examines the ordinary means of reconciliation and raises many questions. His presentation is limited to the third rite of reconciliation, which he believes should become an "ordinary" way of celebrating the sacrament as is the first rite.

Bread-baking is more than baking bread: it is a prayerful ministry to the community. Thus this volume is not just recipes, but an orientation to ministry. It also contains recipes faithful to the various liturgical traditions of the Christian churches.


The author has always been at the forefront of liturgical praxis and these volumes form the vanguard for training lay people who are asked to lead services and share reflections on the word of God. It may be unfortunate that many books increasingly appeal to "lay" presiders and preachers, for presiding is presiding and preaching is preaching. What we need to do is train good presiders and preachers, both lay and ordained for our liturgical communities. Thus these books are valid and most helpful for all those who preside and preach and not just lay persons.


This book is more for pastoral teams and parish leadership as opposed to liturgical leadership. It is a handy reference book that is simple and direct.


Written primarily for the couple in simple language, this book helps to open the world of church weddings to couples. Weddings are often regarded as private or family ceremonies. This book helps couples to root marriage in the community by leading the prospective bride and groom to a larger vision of what they are celebrating. The chapters on the liturgy of the wedding are particularly good. The scripture readings are the NAB translation.


This volume in the Series of Pastoral Music in Practice may be a bit heavy in sections, but it is well worth the effort. Unfortunately there are still church musicians who have not yet learned that the role of the choir is not to entertain the assembly, but to minister to the assembly: to enable the assembly to worship. This volume deals primarily with this problem, and is a good resource for those who have not discovered the meaning of the reforms of Vatican II.


This is an easy to read, yet complete historical (and pictorial) analysis of the development of the eucharist. It is well written and illustrated and combines information on history, architecture, geography, vessels, liturgical books and art.


This forms the third in a trilogy of Miryam books on the mother of God and forms a series of meditations based on Mary as teacher of the apostles, the Jerusalem community and all followers of Jesus. The book is divided into three sections: study, prayer and daily living.
Woman's Story: Biblical Models for our Time by Pamela Smith (Twenty-Third Publications, 185 Willow Street, Mystic CT 06355-0180). Paper, 103 pages, US $7.95, ISBN 0-89622-460-0. Fifty-six stories of women from scripture are imaginatively presented as models for today's Christians. Beginning with a scripture quotation, each portrait is developed by a poetic retelling of the characteristic dimension of the role model.


Meeting House Essays, Number Two: Acoustics for Liturgy: A Collection of Articles of the Hymn Society in the US and Canada, edited by Paul Westermeyer (Liturgy Training Publications, 1800 North Heritage Avenue, Chicago, IL 60622-1101). Paper, 64 pages, bibliography, US $4.00, ISBN 0-929650-53-0. Acoustics may not be a primary consideration in the design and renovation of church buildings, but this volume provides some important challenges and priorities for church buildings. The articles in this number first appeared in the July 1990 issue of The Hymn, the journal of the Hymn Society in the U.S. and Canada and also deal with congregational singing and musical instruments, as well as reflect on the expertise of an architect, an acoustician, a musician, an organ builder, a theologian and a pastor.

The Three Days: Parish Prayer in the Paschal Triduum by Gabe Huck (Liturgy Training Publications, 1800 North Heritage Avenue, Chicago, IL 60622-1101.) Paper, 206 pages, illustrations, US $11.95, ISBN 0-929650-51-4. This is a re-written and expanded version of the classic work on the Easter Triduum. It is highly recommended for liturgical planners and pastors.

Canadian Studies in Liturgy was created in 1985 for all who are concerned about good worship and prayer. This series encourages a deeper understanding of the liturgy and its importance in our lives. Each issue explores one particular topic and challenges us all to better the celebration of the liturgy. Canadian Studies in Liturgy appears at varying intervals. To date, five issues have been published.

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