

# HOLY WEEK AND CHRISTIAN RENEWAL



Lit 36

*Colloquium to Catechists, in Preparation for Holy Week and the  
Easter Triduum by  
His Grace Archbishop Cyprian Kizito Lwanga*

**Simon P.M. Kyambadde**

27 February 2008



# Contents

GROUP SHARING.....	4
MOVIE: “THE PASSION”.....	5
THE 1 <sup>ST</sup> HOLY WEEK: JESUS’ LAST DAYS ON EARTH.....	5
HOLY WEEK TODAY .....	8
<i>Palm Sunday</i> .....	8
<i>Chrism Mass</i> .....	10
<i>Easter Triduum</i> .....	17
<i>Holy Thursday</i> .....	18
<i>Good Friday</i> .....	22
<i>Holy Saturday</i> .....	25
<i>Easter Vigil</i> .....	26
<i>Easter Sunday (Mass during the Day)</i> .....	31
<i>Conclusion</i> .....	31
APPENDIX: SHARING IN THE LIGHT OF PASTORAL EXPERIENCE ..	32
<i>Discussion Results</i> .....	32
FINAL WORD TO CATECHISTS.....	36
RÉSUMÉ.....	39

## GROUP SHARING

*If participants constitute a big group they can be divided in smaller groups of about 7 members to share on the questions below. They can then later on come together to share their findings in the bigger group.*

1) What is your experience of this and past Lenten seasons, with regard to personal renewal?

2) Share about your liturgical activities as a catechist during Holy Week:

- What do you actually do on the different days of Holy Week?
- What are the difficulties and challenges you encounter?
- What enlightenment would you wish to receive from the Church?

3) If you are involved in Christian initiation describe what you do during Lent and Holy Week. What are the challenges you encounter?

## **MOVIE: "THE PASSION"**

*According to opportunity and available time, the participants may be shown the film "The Passion" by Mel Gibson, as prelude to the input on Holy Week.*

## **THE 1<sup>ST</sup> HOLY WEEK: JESUS' LAST DAYS ON EARTH**

*Matthew 16:21-23* From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men."

*Matthew 17:22-23* As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day." And they were greatly distressed.

*Matthew 20 :17-19* And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man

will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."

The gospels report three times when Jesus announced what was going to happen to him in Jerusalem. They leave us with no doubts that he knew exactly what was going to happen.

It is not easy for us who have never seriously faced death to know what it feels like to know you will be dead in about a month's time, and the exact nature of your death. Think of those who have a terminal disease and know that in a month or so they shall be dead. Think of the one condemned to death.

Even an animal that gets to know of impending death becomes wild. A cow that smells the blood of another slaughtered cow, or a chicken that escapes while being plucked can turn wild.

Death of a terminal illness or the death of a condemned criminal does not compare with the death that awaited Jesus. (*Refer to the movie The Passion if it has been viewed*). Death by hanging or by firing squad or by lethal injection is in fact mercy death. His was torture. But the amazing thing is the serenity with which Jesus faced his death. Think of the Triumphal Entry: He prepared for it meticulously. He arranged to have a colt. Perhaps he dressed in his best tunic which the soldiers later found too good to tear into two. He accepted the homage given to him, even though he knew that the same people's cries of Hosanna would turn

to “crucify him” even before the branches were completely dry. Think of his acceptance of the hospitality at Bethany in the home of Lazarus. He graciously accepted the anointing by Mary Magdalene, and he defended her act against criticism. She perhaps had sensed in his words what the disciples had refused to see; namely that he had only a few days to live. Think of his preparation for the Last Super. Think of all that took place during the celebration of that supper; the words that we have come to repeat every day during Mass. Every word, every gesture was deliberate, in spite of the fact that in a few hours he would be suffering his passion.

What Jesus did and went through during that last week has become to be of supreme importance to us. Over the centuries, the Church has pondered everything in the light of the Old Testament, and developed an elaborate liturgy of Holy Week. It would be interesting to treat in detail the entire development of Holy Week through the centuries, but unfortunately time cannot allow that. Instead we are going to reflect on Holy Week as we celebrate it today, in the light of the First Holy Week.

What is important to bear in mind through the different activities and symbolisms of this week (and indeed, of all liturgy) is that we are invited:

- 1) To remember *what* happened
- 2) To understand *why* it happened
- 3) To appreciate *how* it affects us
- 4) To respond appropriately in our lives

## HOLY WEEK TODAY

### PALM SUNDAY<sup>1</sup>

Palm Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week. On it Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem is celebrated. The waving of the branches is a sign of honour to Christ our King and Savior. Traditionally this entry is celebrated with a procession.

In a parish community where several Masses are celebrated on Sunday the procession is to be celebrated only once in the Mass that is attended most. Catechists have the duty to encourage those of their faithful who are able to join the parish community where a solemn procession is going to be celebrated. However, those of the faithful who are unable to join the parish community must not be deprived of the opportunity to celebrate this or the other events of Holy Week.

During this Mass the Passion is also read. The celebrant is urged to explain the connection between the triumph and the passion of the Lord. Jesus had told the Jews that when they would lift him up on the cross then they would know that it is He. What in the eyes of the world, of Christ's enemies and of the Devil was defeat, was in the infinite wisdom of God Christ's victory. And so on this day the

---

<sup>1</sup> *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar (GNLY)* 30-31; *Ceremonial of Bishops (CB)* 263.



triumphal entry is immediately followed by the reading of the passion.

During the proclamation of the Passion the following should be omitted: candles, the use of incense, the greeting, the sign of the cross; thus giving the passion an appropriate austere mood. Normally the passion should be proclaimed in full for the spiritual good of the people. After this proclamation a homily should be given.

On the days of Holy Week from Monday to Thursday inclusive the final preparations for the Easter Triduum may be performed. In the parish church these preparations include penitential services, singing practices, making ready for the reception of new oils, preparation of the Easter Candle, rehearsals for the Way of the Cross, preparation of the Exultet, celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, preparation of the Altar of Repose, etc. In sub-parishes among the activities is included the final preparation of those who are to receive the sacraments of initiation.

*We all now and then have unpleasant tasks before us. We can postpone them, we can avoid them, we can take them on complaining all the time, or we can choose to enjoy the joy and glory connected with our assignments and avoid the necessary pain entailed. Palm Sunday invites us to take the example of Our Lord. He knew exactly what awaited him in Jerusalem: derision, pain, betrayal, desertion, torture, crucifixion, death. Yet he set on the journey triumphantly with the eyes set on the victory beyond the inevitable pain.*

## CHRISM MASS<sup>2</sup>

This Mass, which the bishop concelebrates with his college of presbyters and at which he consecrates the holy Chrism and blesses the other oils, manifests the communion of the presbyters with their bishop. Other priests who are working or living in the diocese, but who do not belong to the diocese, join the diocesan bishop at this Mass. Priests who take part but for some reason do not concelebrate may receive communion under both kinds. The Mass commemorates the institution of the sacrament of Orders that Christ performed at the Last Supper. However, for pastoral reasons it is celebrated separately from the evening Mass of the Last Supper.

The readings at this Mass show us clearly how Christ is the Anointed One of God, and what this means (first reading, gospel). We share in the life and ministry of the Anointed One, for “He made us a line of kings, priests to serve his God and Father” (second reading).

Members of the faithful are welcome to join their bishop and priests as they renew their promises to God. Within the liturgy and in their private prayers they pray for their shepherds that they may be faithful to their promises, so that God’s flock may be properly nourished. Catechists have the duty to explain to their congregations the significance of this day for the priests and for the entire Church, and encourage the congregation to pray for their priests.

---

<sup>2</sup> Ceremonial of Bishops, 274-294. Roman Missal, Chrism Mass; Roman Pontifical: Rite of Blessing of Oils and Chrism.

### *Meaning and Use of the Oils*

The Christian liturgy has adopted the Old Testament usage of anointing kings, priests, and prophets with consecratory oil because they prefigured Christ, whose name means "the anointed of the Lord." The Chrism is a sign that Christians, incorporated by baptism into the paschal mystery of Christ, dying, buried, and rising with him, are sharers in his kingly and prophetic priesthood and that by confirmation they receive the spiritual anointing of the Spirit who is given to them. Therefore it is consecrated by the bishop and used to anoint the newly baptized, to seal the candidates for confirmation, and to anoint the hands of presbyters and the heads of bishops at their ordination. It is also used in the rites of anointing pertaining to the dedication of churches and altars.

The oil of catechumens is used in the preparation of the catechumens for their baptism. It extends the effects of the baptismal exorcism: it strengthens the candidates with the power to renounce the devil and sin before they go to the font of life for rebirth.

The oil of the sick, for the use of which James is the witness, (James 5:14) provides the sick with a remedy for both spiritual and bodily illness, so that they may have strength to withstand the suffering caused by sickness and the temptations which this suffering can cause. It also helps them to obtain pardon for their sins.

### *Time and place of celebration*

If it is difficult for the clergy and the people to assemble with the bishop on Holy Thursday morning, the blessing

may be held on an earlier day, near Easter, with the celebration of the proper Chrism Mass. This is particularly the case where priests who come from the different parts of the diocese must rush back to be in time to celebrate the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper. Some cannot possibly make it due to long distances, and, in some areas, due to the difficulty of the means of transport.

Because of its meaning and pastoral importance in the life of the diocese, the Chrism Mass should be celebrated in the cathedral church or, for pastoral reasons, in another church.

According to the tradition of the Latin liturgy, the blessing of the oil of the sick takes place before the end of the Eucharistic Prayer; the blessing of the oil of catechumens and the consecration of the Chrism, after communion. For pastoral reasons, however, the entire rite of blessing may take place after the liturgy of the word.

### ***Preparations***

For the blessing of oils the following preparations are made in addition to what is needed for the celebration of a stational Mass:

In the vesting room or some other convenient place

Vessels of oil

Balsam or perfume for the preparation of the Chrism, if the bishop wishes to mix the Chrism during the liturgical service

Bread, wine and water for Mass, which are carried with the oils before the preparation of the gifts.

In the sanctuary

The Roman Missal (Sacramentary)

Table for the vessels of oil, placed so that the people may see the entire rite easily and take part in it

Chair for the bishop, if the blessing takes place in front of the altar.

### *Description of the rite*

The preparation of the bishop, the concelebrants, and other ministers, their entrance into the church, and everything from the beginning of Mass until the end of the liturgy of the word follow the provisions given for rite for a concelebrated Mass with the bishop.

After the homily, the priests stand before the bishop, and he addresses them with the questions that call on them to renew their commitment to priestly service.<sup>3</sup> It is practical for the Master of Ceremonies to prepare a duplicate of the promises for each of the priests so that they may follow and know when to respond. If possible the congregation may also be furnished with copies so that they may know when to make their own responses.

---

<sup>3</sup> See RM, Proper of Seasons, Holy Thursday, rubrics for the Chrism Mass.

Then, putting aside the pastoral staff and mitre, the bishop stands. The profession of faith is not said. In the intercessions, as given in the Roman Missa, the faithful are invited to pray for their pastors.

Then the bishop sits in the chair, wearing the mitre. The deacons and ministers appointed to carry the oils or, in their absence, some priests and ministers, together with the faithful who will carry the bread and the wine and water, go in procession to the vesting room (sacristy) or other place where the oils and other offerings have been prepared. Returning to the altar, they follow this order: first, the minister carrying the vessel of balsam, if the bishop wishes to mix the Chrism; then the minister with the vessel for the oil of catechumens, if it is to be blessed; the minister with the vessel for the oil of the sick; lastly a deacon or priest carrying the oil for the Chrism. The ministers or faithful who carry the bread and the wine and water for the celebration of the Eucharist follow them.

During the procession through the church, the choir leads the singing of the hymn *O Redemptor* or some other suitable song in place of the song for the presentation of the gifts (offertory song).

The bishop receives the gifts at the chair or in a more convenient place. The deacon who carries the vessel of oil for the Chrism shows it to the bishop, saying aloud, the *oil for the holy Chrism*.<sup>4</sup> The bishop takes the vessel and gives it to one of the deacons assisting him to place it on the table

---

<sup>4</sup> These and subsequent prayers indicated in italics can be found in the Roman Missal, rubrics for the Chrism Mass.

prepared for it. Those who carry the vessels for the oil of the sick and the oil of catechumens do the same.

The first says, *the oil of the sick*; the second says, *the oil of catechumens*. The bishop takes the vessels in the same way, and the ministers place them on the table. The Mass continues in the usual way, unless the entire rite of blessing takes place immediately in the alternative way.

Before the bishop says the words *Through Christ our Lord you give us all these gifts* in the Eucharistic Prayer I or the doxology *Through him* in the other Eucharistic prayers, the one who carries the vessels for the oil of the sick brings it to the altar and holds it in front of the bishop, who blesses the oil by saying or singing the *prayer God of all consolation*. After the blessing, the vessel with the oil of the sick is returned to its place, and the Mass continues until the communion rite is completed.

After the prayer after communion, the deacons place the oil of catechumens to be blessed and the Chrism to be consecrated on a table that has been placed in the centre of the sanctuary. The bishop and the concelebrants go to the table with the deacons and ministers. The bishop stands facing the people, and the concelebrating presbyters stand around him on either side, in a semicircle, and the deacons and other ministers stand behind him.

When everything is ready, the bishop proceeds to the blessing of the oil of catechumens, if it is to be blessed. Without the mitre, he stands facing the people and, with hands outstretched, says the prayer *Lord God, protector of all who believe in you*.

Then the bishop sits, wearing the mitre, and pours the balsam or perfume into the oil and in silence mixes the Chrism, unless this has been done beforehand. Without the mitre, he stands and sings or says the invitation *Let us pray that God*. As circumstances suggest, he may then breathe over the vessel of Chrism. Then, with hands outstretched, he says one of the consecratory prayers. At the words *And so, Father, we ask you* until the end of the consecratory prayer, all the concelebrants hold the right hand outstretched toward the Chrism without saying anything.

When for pastoral reasons the entire rite of blessing of oils is to be celebrated after the liturgy of the word, the procedure is as follows. The vessels with the oils to be blessed and of Chrism to be consecrated are presented to the bishop then placed by the deacons on a table that has been placed in the centre of the sanctuary. Everything is done as already described. The Mass then proceeds in the usual way from the preparation of the gifts until the prayer after communion has been said.

When the Chrism has been consecrated after the communion rite, otherwise when the prayer after communion has been said, the bishop gives the blessing in the usual way; then he puts incense into the censer and blesses it. After the deacon has said, *The Mass is ended, go in peace* or a different formula of dismissal, the procession to the vesting room is formed. The censer-bearer carrying a censer with burning incense leads the procession, and the blessed oils are carried, each by its own minister, immediately after the cross; the choir and people sing some verses of the hymn *O Redemptor* or some other suitable song. In the vesting room or sacristy the bishop may



instruct the presbyters about the reverent use and safe custody of the holy oils.

#### EASTER TRIDUUM<sup>5</sup>

The Easter Triduum consists of the three days from Holy Thursday evening to Easter Sunday evening. On these three days the Church recalls Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection by which he redeemed the world as we recall in the Memorial Acclamation: "dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life..."<sup>6</sup>

Because of the importance of having a worthy and well-prepared celebration of the core events of our salvation, and because of the shortage of priests and other ministers in many parts of the world it is suitable that wherever possible small communities join to celebrate these events together. Thus sub-parishes may join at the parish where this is practical. Small religious communities can join the main parish community. Groups and associations need not expect to have a separate liturgy for themselves such as on the Easter Vigil. This among other things might strain the priest's strength who after celebrating the Easter Vigil for the parish community must also celebrate other masses in sub-parishes during the day. Even in places where more than one parish is cared for by the same priest, people may come together and celebrate in one central parish where

---

<sup>5</sup> It is helpful in the days of the Easter Triduum in particular for the priest and the ministers to make a careful study of the *Ordo* because of the complexity and manifold details of the liturgy. for further information on the Easter Triduum see GNLV 18-21; CB 295, 297, 312, 332, 371; *General Introduction to the Liturgy of the Hours (Found in the first volume of the Breviary)* 130, 133-134, 151, 208-214.

<sup>6</sup> GNLV 18.

this is possible. We now look at each of the days of the Easter Triduum in turn.

## HOLY THURSDAY<sup>7</sup>

### *Meaning*

The Easter Triduum proper begins with the Evening Mass of Holy Thursday, which is referred to as the Mass of the Lord's Supper.<sup>8</sup> This Mass commemorates the commandment of Love symbolised by the washing of the feet of the twelve apostles. It also recalls the institution of the Holy Eucharist and of the ministerial priesthood. On this day the Church celebrates Christ's two fold giving of himself: to his enemies, to die on the cross for the life of the world. He is the paschal victim, whose blood saves his people (see Old Testament reading at this Mass). Secondly he gives himself to his friends and disciples, his Church - that is, to us - in the sacrament of his body and blood (see reading from St. Paul).

Holy Thursday is also called "Maundy Thursday" from the Latin word "*mandatum*" or "commandment". We commemorate Jesus' command to his disciples at the Last supper. After he had washed his feet he said to them: "*You call me Master and Lord, and rightly; so I am. If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet.*"

---

<sup>7</sup> GNLY 19, 28; CB 297; PS 44-57.

<sup>8</sup> The Easter Triduum begins with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, reaches its high point in the Easter Vigil, and closes with evening prayer on Easter Sunday. GNLY, 19.

*I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you” (John 13:13-15).*

By means especially of the homily, attention should be focused upon the mysteries which are commemorated in this Mass, namely the institution of the Eucharist and that of the priesthood, together with the Lord’s command of brotherly love.

### ***Time of Celebration***

The local situation determines the appropriate time of evening when the Mass of the Lord’s Supper should begin.

Priests who have already concelebrated at the Chrism Mass, or who are obliged to celebrate another Mass for the faithful, may also concelebrate at the Mass of the Lord’s Supper. In accord with a most ancient tradition of the Church, the celebration of Mass without a congregation is prohibited on this day.

### ***Liturgical Details***

At the end of Mass, the tabernacle should be left empty. Hosts should be consecrated at this Mass for the communion of clergy and people on this day and on Good Friday, as well as for the sick.

It is fitting that for the reservation of the Eucharist to serve for communion on Good Friday, a chapel should be arranged in which prayer and meditation may be fostered, but it is also highly recommended that all be marked by that austerity which is appropriate to these days. The Blessed Sacrament should be reserved in a closed tabernacle, exposition in a monstrance being absolutely

excluded. Nor should the tabernacle in any way have the appearance of a tomb, since the chapel of reservation is not intended to represent the Lord's tomb, but only to reserve the Blessed Sacrament for communion for the next day.

While the Gloria is being sung, the bells are rung. From the end of this hymn the bells are then silent until the Easter Vigil, unless the Episcopal conference or the Bishop of the diocese for appropriate reasons decides otherwise.

The following items are required for the preparation of this Mass:

In a convenient place in the sanctuary:

Ciborium with hosts that are to be consecrated also for Good Friday

Humeral veil

Second censor and incense boat

At the place for the foot-washing

Seats for the men chosen

Pitcher of water and basin

Towels for drying the feet

Apron for the main celebrant

Requisites for the washing of the hands of the celebrant

In the chapel where the Blessed Sacrament will be kept

Tabernacle or repository for the Blessed Sacrament

Lights, flowers, and any other suitable decoration<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Ceremonial of Bishops*, no. 299.

### ***The Washing of Feet***

“The washing of feet, which according to the tradition for this day is done for a selected number of men, shows forth the service and the love of Christ, who came not to be served but to serve. It is appropriate that this tradition be maintained and its true meaning be explained.”<sup>10</sup>

### ***Gifts for the Poor***

In the procession bearing the gifts it is fitting that there be included the gifts destined for the poor, especially gifts which have been collected during Lent as the fruits of penance.

### ***Reposition of the Blessed Sacrament***

At the end of the prayer after communion, the procession makes its way through the church with incense and candles, bearing the Eucharist to the chapel of reservation.

At the end of the celebrations the altar is unceremoniously stripped and if possible all crosses are taken away from the church. It is appropriate that any crosses remaining in the church be veiled, if they have not already been veiled after evening prayer I of the fifth Sunday of Lent.

The faithful should be reminded to spend a suitable length of time during the night, according to circumstances of time and place, in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament reserved, in such a way, however, that after midnight the adoration takes place without ceremony.

---

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ordo 2002 p. 91 no. 7.

The procession and the reposition of the Blessed Sacrament should not take place in churches where it is intended to celebrate the solemn Liturgy of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday.

## GOOD FRIDAY<sup>11</sup>

### *Significance*

“On this day, when Christ our paschal Lamb was sacrificed, the Church contemplates and adores the Cross of her Lord and Spouse, commemorating her own coming forth from the side of Christ as he slept on the Cross, and interceding for the salvation of all the world.”<sup>12</sup>

### *Manner of celebration*

According to a most ancient tradition, the Church does not celebrate the Eucharist on this day. Holy Communion is distributed to the faithful solely during the celebration of the Lord's Passion. It may, however, be borne at any time to the sick who are unable to take part in this liturgy. There should be no celebration of the Sacraments today, with the exception of the sacrament of Penance and of Anointing of the Sick. Baptism can be given in danger of death. Funerals should be conducted without singing and without organ music or the ringing of bells, and obviously without Mass.

The celebration of the Lord's Passion takes place in the afternoon, round about 3.00 p.m. if, however, genuine pastoral reasons require it, the celebration may take place at

---

<sup>11</sup> GNLY 20; CB 312; PS 58-72.

<sup>12</sup> *Ordo* 2001, p. 92 no. 1.

a more suitable time, but not before noon and not after 9.00 p.m. “The whole liturgy should be conducted according to the prescriptions of the liturgical books. No one should introduce changes on his own initiative.”<sup>13</sup>

The altar should be bare and devoid of cloth, cross and candlesticks. The narrative of the Lord’s Passion is read without candles, incense, initial greeting or marking of the book with the sign of the cross. It is read by the deacon, or in his absence, by a priest. It may be read even by a lector, the part of Christ being reserved if possible to the priest. At the end of the reading of the passion “this is the gospel of the Lord” is said but the book is not kissed.

The cross which is shown to the people and proffered for adoration should be sizeable beautiful. The formula for the showing of the cross and the people’s response should be sung. For reasons of appropriate symbolism, there should be a single cross for adoration but care should be taken that the individual faithful are able to adore the cross, a feature of great importance in this day’s celebration. The rite by which the cross is adored in silence by the whole congregation as a body should be used only if the faithful are present in very large numbers.

After the celebration on the Lord’s Passion, the Blessed Sacrament should be carried back in a simple way to the place of reservation and kept there with the usual lamp burning. The altar should be stripped in private, leaving however the cross and candlesticks. It is fitting that a place be arranged (as, for example, the chapel used for reposi-

---

<sup>13</sup> *Ordo* 2001, p. 93 no. 5.

and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament the previous evening), suitable for prayer and meditation, and that the cross be placed there to be adored by the faithful.

Of great significance are also popular devotional exercises that are of pastoral importance, such as the Stations of the Cross, processions of the Lord's Passion, the commemoration of the Sorrows of Our lady. Their texts and sung parts should be in harmony with the liturgy, and should lead the people to true liturgical participation.

“Before morning Lauds on Good Friday... the Office of Readings is, if possible, to be celebrated publicly and with the people taking part.”<sup>14</sup> But Vespers are not celebrated by those who take part in the evening liturgy.

### *Structure of the Liturgy*

The liturgy of this day is divided in four main parts: The introductory part begins with prostration of the presider and concelebrants together with the ministering deacons. This is done as a symbol of deep veneration of the Paschal Mystery. The rest of the congregation kneels in silence.

The second part is the Liturgy of the Word. Its main purpose is that the worshipers may understand the meaning of Christ's Passion. Two readings are taken followed by the account of the Passion. The readings are followed by the Intercessions in which the congregation prays in Christ's spirit for the needs of the world.

---

<sup>14</sup> GILH, 210.



The third part is the Veneration of the Cross, which is a symbol of Christ's love, passion and victory. (On this day it is customary to genuflect to the cross when set out for adoration after the evening liturgy). The cross is shown to the people three times followed by their veneration of it, preferably in pairs.

The fourth and last part is the Liturgy of the Eucharist in which the worshipping community enters into sacramental communion with Christ. The altar is laid with the altar cloth and the corporal. The Eucharist is brought with candles in silence. The liturgy begins with the Our Father. After the liturgy all depart in silence.

#### HOLY SATURDAY<sup>15</sup>

##### *Significance*

During the day of Holy Saturday the Church recalls the time the Lord spent in the tomb. It continues to meditate on his suffering, death and descent into hell. At the same time it waits in prayer and fasting for his resurrection.

##### *Manner of celebration*

During the day an image of Christ crucified or laid in the tomb may still be set out for veneration. Alternatively an image of Our Lady of Sorrows may be used, such as the Pieta. Appropriate devotions such as those that honour our Lady of sorrows may be celebrated. On this day as on Good Friday the Eucharist is not celebrated. Communion

---

<sup>15</sup> GNLY 20; PS 73-76.

is not given out except to the dying as Viaticum. Of the other sacraments only Penance and Anointing of the Sick may be celebrated. The altar remains bare.

As on Good Friday it is appropriate on Holy Saturday as well, to celebrate Lauds solemnly with the people and to include the Office of Readings in the celebrations.<sup>16</sup> Those who take part in the celebration of the Easter Vigil later on do not recite Compline.

Holy Saturday during the day also serves as the time to finalise liturgical preparations for the Vigil celebrations. These may include preparation of the fire, rehearsals for the readers, final rehearsal of the Easter Proclamation or *Exultet*, Liturgy of the Catechumens where this will take place, acquisition of new oils to be used for baptism in the Easter Night if these are not yet procured, preparation of the water to be blessed and of the baptismal font, decoration of the Church, preparation of the vestments and seeing to all the necessary details.

## EASTER VIGIL<sup>17</sup>

### *Significance*

At the Easter Vigil of Saturday night the Church celebrates Christ's resurrection. The Church keeps vigil, awaiting the Lord in joyful prayer. It is important to understand that the element of waiting is part of the meaning of this long celebration. Waiting is never easy. But waiting is a sign of

---

<sup>16</sup> GILH, 210.

<sup>17</sup> LM 99; GNLV 17-21; CB 332; PS 3, 00-95; GILH 208-214.

love for the one awaited. We have only to recall the parable of the ten bridesmaids.<sup>18</sup> Or the waiting of the apostles in the Garden of Gethsemane as their Lord prayed, a waiting which was not very successful. The waiting of Christ's faithful before his resurrection, among whom were his Mother and the Holy women was not an easy one. The Church recalls that holy waiting, but in a joyful mood for now his resurrection is a reality, a historical even. To sustain that waiting and to make it meaningful the liturgy has the long and many readings that recall the history of our redemption tracing it from its beginning. Before any pastor rashly abbreviates the liturgy of the Easter Vigil he should recall these facts. On this night the Church also celebrates what the resurrection of the Lord meant for us, namely our own rebirth in baptism. For that reason new members are baptised on this occasion, while the old members renew their baptismal promises.

### ***Manner of Celebration***

The whole celebration of the Easter Vigil should take place by night, in such a way that it does not begin before the onset of night and concludes by first light of Sunday. The practice of celebrating the Easter Vigil on the Saturday evening at the same time when the Sunday Vigil Masses are habitually celebrated is to be censured. The whole of the celebration is, moreover, to be so arranged that its nature as a protracted vigil is safeguarded. The celebration of a Mass without the rites of the Easter Vigil is not allowed.

---

<sup>18</sup> This keeping vigil is also symbolical of the awaiting of the Lord's Second Coming. See *Ordo* 2001 p. 95 no. 1.

The Easter Vigil may be celebrated even in churches and oratories where the liturgies of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday have not taken place, but on the other hand the Vigil is not of obligation when they have. The celebration of the Vigil is, however, compulsory where there is a baptismal font.

The whole celebration is summarised thus: “Tonight’s vigil should be so arranged that after the brief Liturgy of Light or *lucernarium* (which is the first part of the Vigil), the Church meditate on the marvels the Lord God wrought for his people from the very beginning and strengthens by his Word and his promise (the second part of the Vigil, or liturgy of the Word), until the moment when with the approaching Day of the Resurrection, together with her new members reborn in baptism (third part), she is called to the table which the Lord spread out for his people by means of his Death and Resurrection (forth part).<sup>19</sup>

The whole Easter Vigil proceeds by means of symbols and rites which call for a certain grandeur and dignity, in order that the faithful may grasp their meaning, prompted even by the words of the commentaries, invitations and prayers. It is fitting in particular that the faithful be introduced by means of a brief introduction to the understanding of the typological meaning of the Old Testament readings proclaimed during the Vigil.

---

<sup>19</sup> *Ordo* 2001 p. 96 no. 2.

### ***Structure of the Liturgy***

The liturgy therefore has four parts, namely: the Service of the Light, the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of Baptism and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The Service of the Light in turns includes the blessing of the fire, the lighting of the Easter candle,<sup>20</sup> procession into the church and the Easter Proclamation. As regards the blessing of the fire, in so far as possible a large fire should be prepared outside the church, such that its flames may truly scatter the darkness and light up the night. The Easter candle, for effective symbolism, should be made of wax, of one piece, and of a considerable size, and be renewed every year. For it must represent the figure of Christ who as the True Light, illuminates the whole world. The candle should be blessed with the words and gestures laid down by the liturgical books or which have been prescribed by the Bishops' conference. The Easter Proclamation or *Exultet* may be sung, in case of necessity, even by a cantor who is not a deacon, but in this even the cantor does not receive a blessing from the celebrant. Moreover the second part of the invitation is omitted (*Quapropter... or My dearest friends, standing with me...*) as is the greeting (*Dominus vobiscum or The Lord be with you*).

The Liturgy of the Word includes nine readings, seven from the Old Testament, one from the Epistles and the gospel reading. At least three readings are to be proclaimed from the Old Testament, and even in urgent circumstances at least two. The reading from the Book of Exodus is never

---

<sup>20</sup> Its blessing is optional. See rubrics in the Missal.

to be omitted. The proclamation of the readings is followed by a homily. For the proclamation of the gospel reading incense may be used but lights may not be carried, as they would overshadow the symbolism of the Easter Candle.

The Liturgy of Baptism takes on three different forms depending on circumstances. Where baptisms are to take place this part of the liturgy begins by the calling of the baptismal candidates. This is followed by the litany of the saints. Then comes the blessing of water with the Easter candle lowered into the baptismal font. Next comes the confirmation of adults (if a minister with the appropriate faculties is available). Where there is no baptism, but there is the blessing of the baptismal font, first comes the litany of the saints. This is followed by the blessing of water with the Easter Candle lowered into the font. Next comes the renewal of the baptismal promises.<sup>21</sup> Where there is no baptism and no blessing of a baptismal font the first part consists of the blessing of water. This is followed by the renewal of the baptismal promises.

The fourth and last part which is the Liturgy of the Eucharist does not differ much from the ordinary, apart from the fact that the Preface is proper and that some Eucharist Prayers have special insertions for this night which should be remembered. Where there are adult baptisms the newly baptised may bring the gifts in procession. It is also fitting that the fullness of the

---

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Charles W. Gusmer, "Baptismal vows, Renewal of", in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*. Pp. 126-127.

Eucharistic signs be attained in the Easter Vigil by means of communion under both kinds.

#### EASTER SUNDAY (MASS DURING THE DAY)

The Mass of the Easter Day should be celebrated with great solemnity. The pastor needs to remember that many of the faithful who are unable to attend the Vigil Mass have this as their celebration of Easter. Many in fact may not even have attended the liturgical celebrations of the Easter Triduum and only come to this Mass. At this Mass, in place of the opening penitential rites, all are sprinkled with water blessed on Easter Night, to recall their baptism.

#### CONCLUSION

A fruitful celebration of Holy Week requires: 1) That the minister before anybody else seeks purification thorough the sacrament of reconciliation, 2) that he places himself at the service of the people as much as possible, 3) that he makes adequate preparation for all the rites, 4) that he pays particular attention to the readings and all the liturgical texts, and 5) that he responds to the challenge which the word of God imposes.

## **APPENDIX: SHARING IN THE LIGHT OF PASTORAL EXPERIENCE**

*The following discussion questions were given to priests attending a renewal course at St. Augustine's on the module "Holy Week and Christian Renewal" (March 2007). The answers from their group sharing might prove of some relevance to catechists, or they may provoke further reflection on concrete pastoral situations.*

- 1. Considering the Church's plan for the celebration of Holy Week as elaborated above, and your peculiar pastoral situation, discuss what works and what does not work in your place.*
- 2. Where you have had to make adjustments tell the group what these adjustments are.*
- 3. Group members are free to give their opinions on how adjustments enhance or impair the Church's overall purpose of celebration*

### **DISCUSSION RESULTS**

- It does not work to have all the palms blessed by the priest at the parish church on Palm Sunday. Some of the catechists would have to travel very long distances back to their sub parishes. What is normally done is for the catechists to carry out the blessing using the holy water blessed by the priests at the parish.



- It does not work in a certain parish to ask the people to bring palms on Palm Sunday. This is a location where palms are rare and can only be found in valleys far away from most people. What the parish priest does is to acquire them for the people so that they get them from the parish when they come for the celebration. If they were asked to bring their own palms they would simply come empty-handed or not come at all. However, the same people are willing to walk long distances on Good Friday to participate in the Way of the Cross. *Group Response:* The option of making people to get some other form of branches is not a good one. The parish priest felt that this would no longer feel like “Palm Sunday”. There is another alternative of encouraging people to make the hard effort to acquire the palms. Evidently, when they are convinced something is important, they are willing to pay the sacrifice. In other areas, particularly in towns, people make money on Palm Sunday by acquiring the palms and selling them to the faithful who do not have the possibility of procuring the palms themselves. That way they share in the effort and value the ceremony more. Is there anything to learn from such a situation?
  
- It does not work to have the people come for the Way of the Cross, go back to their homes, and return for the afternoon liturgy at 3.00 p.m. In some parishes the two liturgies are celebrated as a continuation. *Group Response:* People must be catechized to understand the difference between

the two celebrations. The Way of the Cross is a popular devotion, even though it has gained universal significance, and it is strongly recommended by the Church. The evening celebration is official liturgy. the faithful should be encouraged to take an active role in this devotion. The priest(s) can then fully dedicate themselves to the afternoon liturgy.

- It does not work for the priests in the entire diocese to come for the Chrism Mass on Maundy Thursday and return to their respective parishes to lead the Mass of the Lord's Supper. Many dioceses have had to choose a different day, Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday of Holy Week. Where Thursday is maintained it remains a burden to some priests.
- It does not work to have children receiving First Holy Communion on Holy Thursday, even if this would be very meaningful, considering that this is the day on which the sacrament was instituted. In some dioceses First Holy Communion is celebrated so festively, that for the children and for the families concerned this celebration makes them forget that they have started the Easter Triduum. The solution is to have them receive First Holy Communion on Holy Saturday, or on Corpus Christi, or on some other suitable time in the year.
- It does not work to have the entire parish community come forward to venerate the cross on Good Friday. In some places a few members of the

congregation carry out the veneration on behalf of the others. In others, three crosses are put out for veneration instead of two. *Group Response:* The group thought that asking a few members to represent others might leave those left out feeling cheated. On the other hand having three crosses instead of one does not seem appropriate. It would give the impression to some that they were venerating the crosses of the two thieves. The cross that has been exposed by the priest should be the one to be used for veneration. The solution is to have people coming in groups of three for example, and to bow instead of kissing the crosses.<sup>22</sup>

- It does not work to demand that only men's feet be washed in every place on Holy Thursday. Some communities consist entirely of women. In some parishes women and girl's feet are washed. *Group Response:* The rubric in the Ceremonial of Bishops no. 301, without insisting, seems to indicate that it is assumed that those to represent the apostles must be males. The celebrant should know that he has the option to omit the actual washing of the feet, as long as the words and gesture of our Lord are explained to the people. But when he opts to carry out the ceremony, then he should be as faithful to what Our Lord did as possible. In general, symbolisms traced back to the Lord are left without modification. For example, we do not use any other material for bread or for wine apart from

---

<sup>22</sup> See "Good Friday" on page 22 above.

those that he used. Nor do we use substitutes for water in the sacrament of baptism, even where water is scarce and other liquids are readily available. For the same reason it seems appropriate to wash both feet and not just one.

- It is not correct to change the text used for the Way of the Cross on Good Friday or any other occasion. *Group Response:* The Way of the Cross is a meditation on the Passion of the Lord. There can be different ways of meditating on the same reality. The variation of these ways can be more enriching. What should be avoided are exaggerations and theological errors. There has been a Way of the Cross formulated as if viewed through the words and feelings of Our Lady as she accompanied her Son to his death. Many people have found this very moving. In general do not insist where there is not good reason to.

## **FINAL WORD TO CATECHISTS**

The catechist gives an invaluable role in the pastoral/liturgical ministry of the Church. At the liturgically busiest time of the year, namely Holy Week this role is even more intensive. Of course, the catechist's role is very much influenced by the distance from the parish, the number of priests available, the mobility (or lack of mobility) of the people under his or her care, etc, such that it is not easy to give guidelines that are applicable to all situations in which catechists work. Nonetheless, below are

a few which each catechist must consider in the light of the peculiar situation.

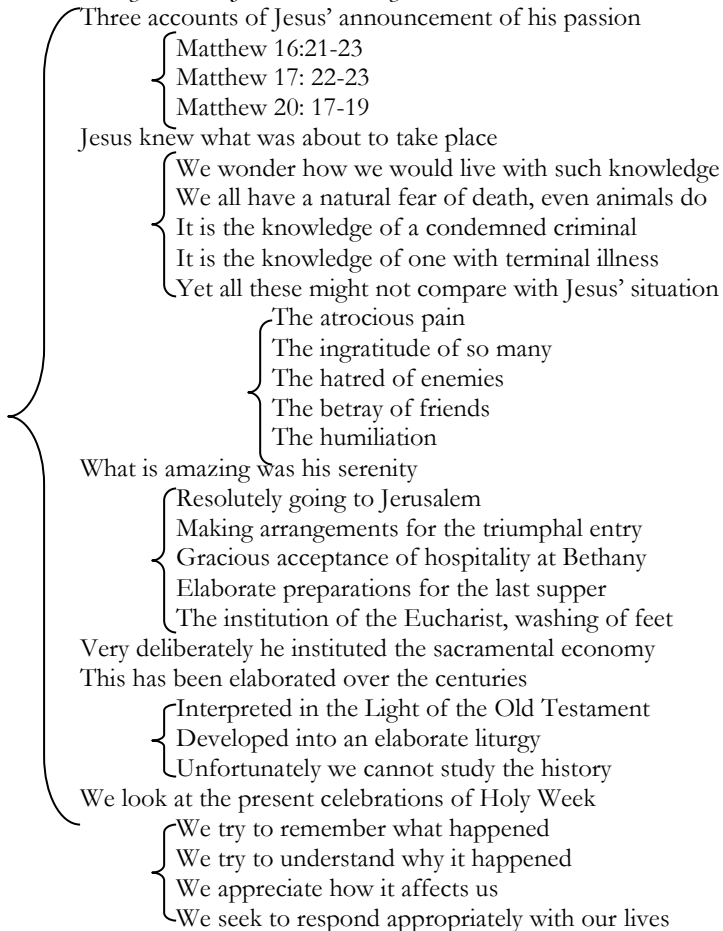
- 1) Encourage all those who are able to, to make the effort and join the parish community in the celebration of the major liturgical activities of the Palm Sunday and the Easter Triduum.
- 2) Encourage people to receive the sacrament of reconciliation, and collaborate with the priests in arranging for confessions.
- 3) Prepare the candidates for Christian initiation to receive the sacraments during the Easter vigil. Help them to understand the relation between their initiation and the celebration of the Easter Triduum.
- 4) Make an effort to explain the meaning of the different events, and how in all of them we are called to respond to God's saving love.
- 5) Help the faithful to celebrate together meaningful devotions, especially the Way of the Cross during this period. Where celebration with other communities are possible encourage them to join.
- 6) In cases of doubt of what you are to do or not to do with regard to the different celebrations, ask your parish priests.

- 7) Take time to prepare for each celebration. Carefully read the rubrics, the prayers and the readings of each celebration. The basic meaning is usually contained in these.

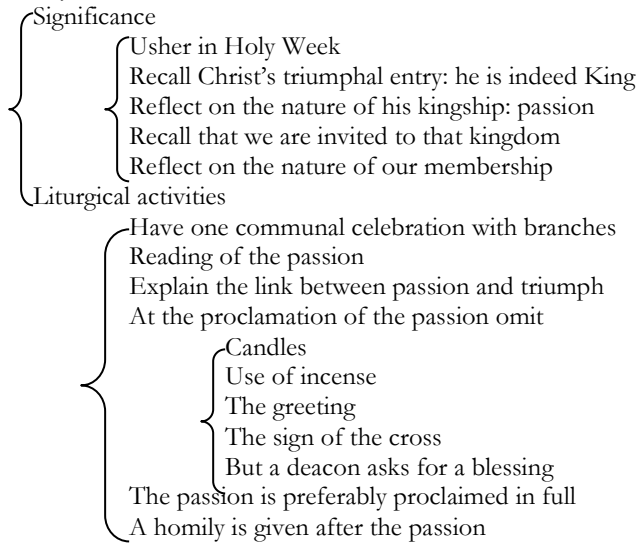
## RÉSUMÉ

What is your experience of Lent with regard to your own renewal and as a means to renew others under your care?

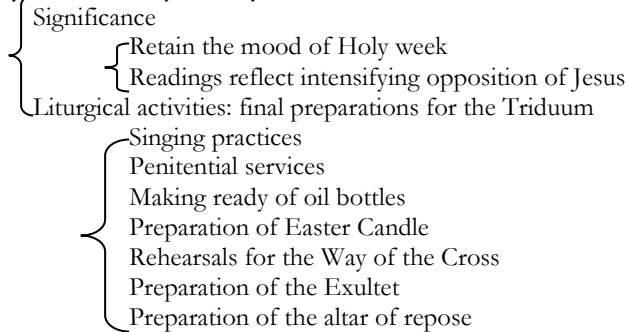
*The First Holy Week: Jesus' Last Days on Earth*



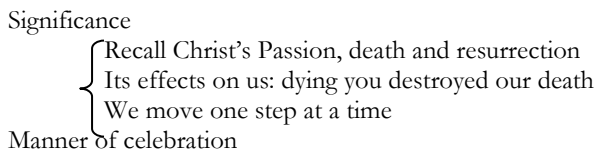
Palm Sunday



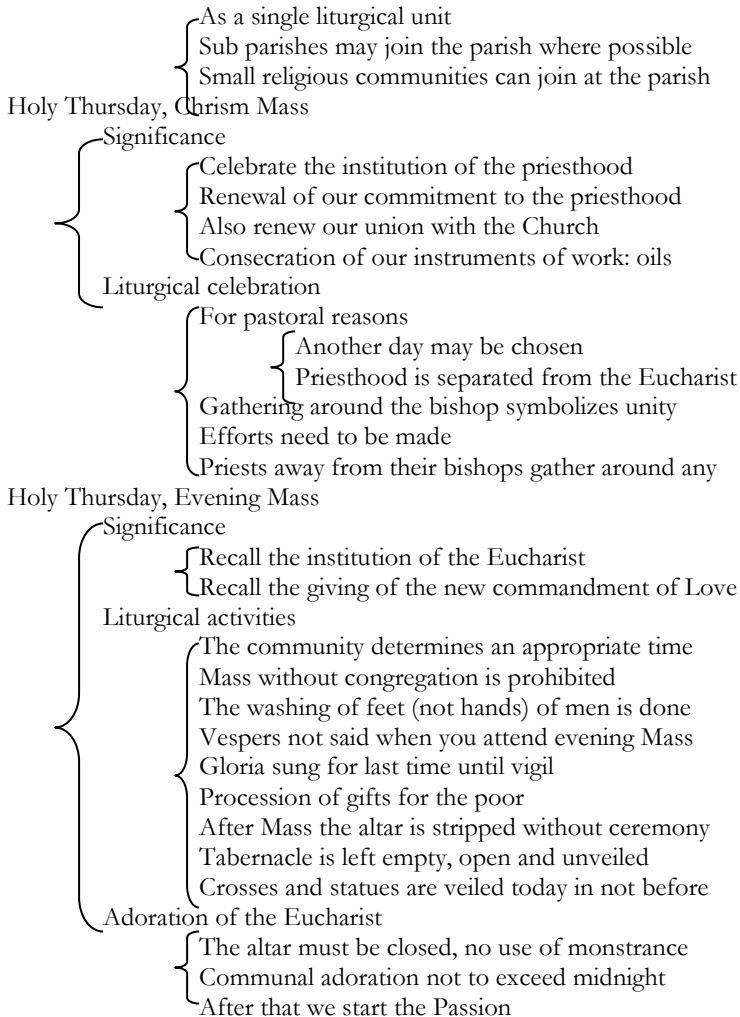
Tuesday to Wednesday of Holy Week



Easter Triduum







## Good Friday

### Significance

- Commemoration of the passion and death of Christ
- The salvific implication for us of the paschal lamb
- Attempt to identify with that death through liturgy

### Manner of celebration

- Easter fast is observed (can also be extended to Sat)
- May celebrate office of readings with the people
- Eucharist is not celebrated today except viaticum
- No other sacraments apart from penance, anointing
- Funerals may be conducted without Mass
- Evening service substitutes vespers

### Evening celebration

- Begins at three (the hour of the Lord's death)
- It is divided in four main parts

#### Prostration chief of ministers

- Symbol of deep veneration
- Others kneel

#### Liturgy of the word

- Two readings and passion
- Intercessions for the world

#### Veneration of the cross

- Symbol of Christ's victory
- Shown to people three times
- Veneration in pairs

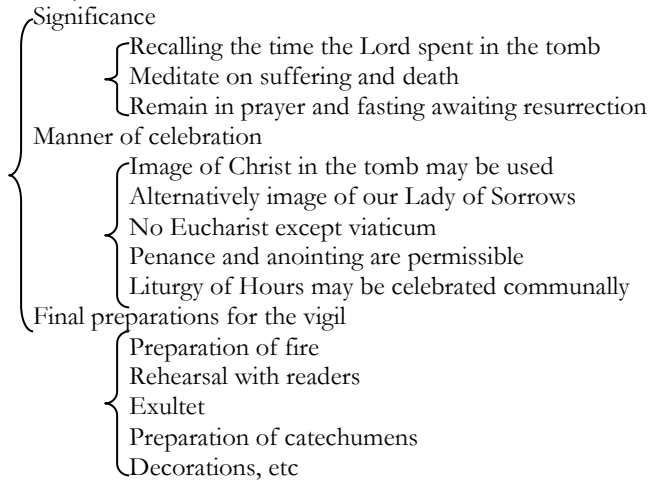
#### Liturgy of the Eucharist

- Sacramental communion with Xt
- Altar laid with cloth
- Altar brought in silence
- After liturgy all depart in silence

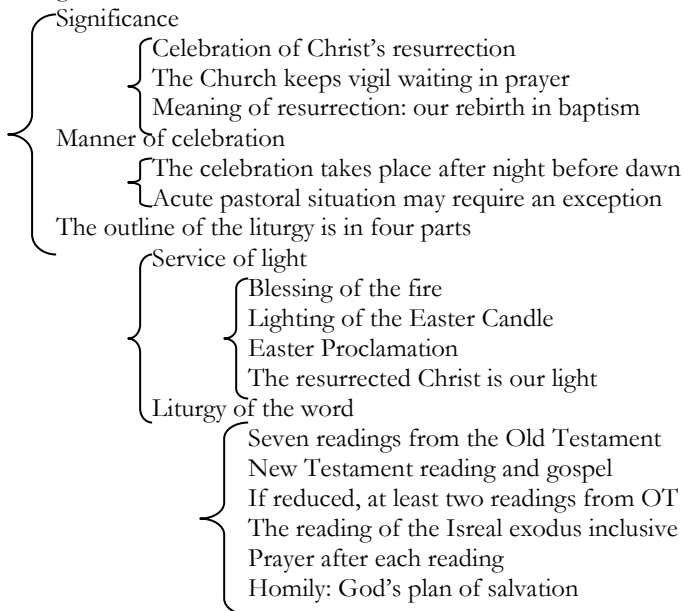
### Popular devotions

- Way of the cross in the morning
- After evening liturgy: sorrows of Mary
- Any devotion must be in harmony with the day

## Holy Saturday



## Easter Vigil



Liturgy of baptism

When there is baptism

{ Calling of candidates

{ Litany of saints

{ Blessing of water

{ Baptism of the candidates

{ Confirmation of adults if permitted

Where there is no baptism but there is a font

{ Litany of saints

{ Blessing of water

{ Renewal of baptismal promises

Where there is no baptism and no font

{ Blessing of water

{ Renewal of baptismal font

Liturgy of the Eucharist (as usual)

Requirements for a fruitful celebration of Holy Week

{ Reception of the sacrament of Reconciliation

{ Availing it to others as much as possible

{ Adequate preparation

{ Careful attention to the readings and liturgical texts

{ Generosity with your time

{ Those in parishes to accept an intense pastoral plan

{ Those in institutions to help out

{ Respond to the challenge of the Word