

HOLY THURSDAY

This is the opening moment of the great celebration of the Triduum. The central elements of this evening's liturgy suggest possibilities for the parish celebration.

The following offers some suggestions in regard to the key points of the celebration.

GATHERING:

When people enter the church will they know that they are entering into the highpoint of the Church's year over these great three days of the Triduum?

How might they sense this in the opening rite of this Liturgy?

How will this liturgy begin and how will people be invited to enter into it?

The following is an example of words that might be spoken before the liturgy begins...

Words of welcome:

Greeter:

Good evening every one.

The time has come – our great feast is about to begin.

We are about to enter into the solemn celebration of the Triduum – the highpoint of our year as Christians.

We remember the words of Jesus to his disciples:

“Go and prepare a room for me”.

This is the room which we have prepared.

This is the room in which we have gathered as a community.

In this place, in these next days

we will celebrate the great mysteries of our faith –

in a few moments of shared silence

let us ready ourselves to celebrate well.

(**Reception of Oils** – Some parishes choose to receive the oils of Catechumens, the Sick and holy Chrism at this opening stage of the liturgy. If this is the case, it can be done ahead of the opening procession with a parishioner introducing it as part of the welcome to the liturgy and the choir leading a sung acclamation as each oil is placed in the worship space. Once the oils are in place the opening hymn begins immediately to accompany the procession. Another alternative is to present the oils at the preparation of the altar – as indicated by the ritual for receiving oils itself. However, the first option does seem to work more smoothly from a liturgical point of view. *A full text for this reception of oils can be found in an accompanying file.*)

Gloria

The ringing of bells during the singing of Gloria gives way to their silence until the Gloria of the Easter vigil.



Liturgy of the word:

This simple and profound rite needs to be richly celebrated in its simplicity, through good proclamation, good cantoring of the Psalm and the use of silence – as well as a good homily!



Washing of feet: A homily in action.

Jesus showed us what it means to be people of Eucharist. We are called to a new commandment of love and service to one another.

There is no indication in the ritual for the need to have 12 men to have their feet washed. No words introduce this rite: the action speaks for itself.

Some Options: Parishes have carried out this ritual in a number of ways, including:

- The presider (and concelebrants) washes the feet of representative parishioners in the sanctuary area.
- The presider goes out to the assembly around the church and washes the feet of pre-assigned parishioners in the pews.
- The presider washes the feet of parishioners who in turn wash other people's feet. (putting into action & modelling the call to do also as I have done for you.)

Washing Hands?: This has been done in some cases but it is a serious diminishment of the sign value of washing feet. Here we are following a scriptural command that is every bit as countercultural today as it was when first done.

Music: This ritual moment is a clear instance in which the music underscores and supports the action that is taking place in the liturgy.



Set up: This rite needs to be thought out very practically for all the elements to work together:

- What are you going to do?
- What do you need in order to do it? (how many pitchers, bowls, towels, seats are needed? –think about the quality of the tools to be used)
- Where will this action take place?
- How will you involve people? (including the congregation)
- How will you co-ordinate with the music ministers?
- When will you instruct whoever needs to be instructed as to what to do?

Obviously this needs to be choreographed well & preferably rehearsed.

Gifts for the poor/ Setting of the table:

The ancient tradition in the church was to gather gifts for the poor at this part of mass. On Holy Thursday we highlight that tradition once more. This year we encourage parishes to bring forward the basket with their **Trocaire** boxes at this point.



Why not...?

- On this night in the year follow the directive for every Eucharistic liturgy – namely to *only use hosts consecrated in this liturgy for communion* – this means bringing forward enough hosts at this time (as well as for Good Friday).
- On this night in the year follow the command of Christ *to take and eat, take and drink* – and offer holy communion under the form of bread and wine to our assembly. (*In making this decision the group preparing this liturgy will need to take into account the current available recommendations for Churches from the HSC in regard to the swine flu pandemic.*)
- Have a family dress the altar at this stage with the altar cloth and candles, and bring forward the gifts of bread and wine as well as the Trócaire Basket.
- Use a setting of *Ubi Caritas* to accompany this rite – this is the only time in the church's liturgies where we are given a hymn text for the Preparation of the altar.

Communion:

- If communion is to be shared in the form of both bread and wine then this is a good time for a parish to look to the quality of its vessels.
- Communion ministers will need to be instructed ahead of time where to position themselves and what they are ministering.
- A general guide for distribution is two cups to accompany one ciborium.

- Music ministers will aid the prayer of the assembly at this time by choosing a piece that accompanies the people's procession to the altar area – a piece with a simple, easily remembered refrain: for example – “Take and Eat” by Michael Joncas (that will speak even louder if people are actually receiving from the cup)
- Do we reach out beyond this liturgy by bringing communion to the homebound on this night?

Transfer of the Eucharist:

This is another unique aspect of the liturgy of these days. Because we are entering into the Paschal Fast of Good Friday and Holy Saturday we leave our tabernacles empty. But we reserve Eucharist for the dying and the sick, as is the constant tradition of the church. We also distribute this Eucharist during our service on Good Friday.

This is perhaps the one time that many of us will hear a Latin text sung in our churches – the strains of the *Pange Lingua* are part of what we welcome back in this annual experience. Traditionally if we need to sing it twice, the first verse is omitted on the repeat.

Again this closing procession needs choreography – led by cross, candles and incense, it has a beginning and an end. Do we know how to move gracefully between the two?

Place of reposition:

This space obviously has to be prepared ahead of time – just needing the Blessed Sacrament to complete it. Once the Blessed Sacrament is reserved here the assembly might be led in a sung hymn such as the Taize chant “*Stay here and remain with me*”.

Prayer is encouraged before the Blessed Sacrament until midnight. Parishes might encourage people to commit to particular times of prayer. Some parishes have concluded this time with a simple celebration of Night Prayer of the Church. (*see separate file for text of this prayer*)

Stripping of the altar: After people have left, the altar is stripped in readiness for our gathering on Friday.