LENT, TRIDUUM & EASTER

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The Diocese of Madison Office of Worship
Revised February 3, 2020

LENT

May the Eucharistic Prayers for Reconciliation be prayed during Mass on the Sundays of Lent?
Yes. The Roman Missal states that these are particularly appropriate during Lent. There are no restrictions regarding their use on Sundays except that the proper Lenten Sunday Preface must be used. For more information see the section in the Roman Missal where the Eucharist Prayers for Reconciliation are located.

Are baptisms permitted during Lent?
Yes. According to the Rite of Baptism for Children, infants are to be baptized within the first weeks after birth (and, of course, baptism when one is in danger of death may happen on any day. The Rite further states, “To bring out the paschal character of baptism, it is recommended that the sacrament be celebrated at the Easter Vigil or on a Sunday when the Church commemorates the Resurrection of the Lord (The Order of Baptism for Children, 9).” If celebrated on a Sunday in Lent or Easter, the Mass proper to that Sunday is used. Since Easter seems a particularly appropriate time for baptism, with the parents permission you may wish to celebrate the baptism on a Sunday of Easter, especially during Mass (9). Other restrictions regarding ritual Masses are noted in The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), no. 372.

Are weddings permitted during Lent?
Yes. Wedding Masses are permitted with the exception of those days noted in GIRM 372 (Ash Wednesday, during Holy Week, the Sundays of Lent and Solemnities). The couple should be advised to take the penitential aspect of the season into account, particularly with regard to music and decorations. According to the Order of Celebrating Matrimony (32) “The celebration of Marriage on Friday of the Passion of the Lord and Holy Saturday is to be avoided altogether.”

May we empty the baptismal font or holy water receptacles for the season of Lent?
No. According to a letter from the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments (March 14, 2000; Prot. N. 569/00/L), this is not permissible. The letter offers two reasons:

1. The liturgical legislation in force does not foresee this innovation, which … is contrary to a balanced understanding of the season of Lent, which though truly being a season of penance, is also a season rich in the symbolism of water and baptism, constantly evoked in liturgical texts.

2. The encouragement of the Church that the faithful avail themselves frequently of the [sic] her sacraments and sacramentals is to be understood to apply also to the season of Lent. The “fast” and “abstinence” which the faithful embrace in this season does not extend to abstaining from the sacraments or sacramentals of the Church. The practice of the Church has been to empty the Holy Water fonts on the days of the Sacred Triduum in preparation of the blessing of the water at the Easter Vigil, and it corresponds to those days on which the Eucharist is not celebrated (i.e., Good Friday and Holy Saturday).
May we have flowers in the sanctuary during Lent?
No, with exceptions. Flowers may be used on Solemnities, Feasts and the Fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday). According to the Order of Celebrating Matrimony (32), the couple should be advised to take into consideration the special nature of the liturgical seasons. It seems reasonable to interpret this to allow floral arrangements at weddings, but they should not be lavish nor should they remain in the sanctuary for Sunday Mass. Flowers also may be in the sanctuary at funerals.

Are there musical requirements during Lent?
Yes. According to the Roman Missal (Lent, no. 4) “the use of musical instruments is allowed only as to support the singing.” This does not apply to Solemnities, Feasts and the Fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday). As noted above regarding flowers, instrumental music may be used at weddings with regard for the penitential character of the season. In general, Lenten music should employ less ornate accompaniments and solo instrumental pieces should not be used. This doesn’t necessarily mean that brief instrumental introductions or interludes may not be used, but they should be limited and brief. The music of Lent should be sparse and reserved in comparison with the music the other seasons.

Do we sing or say the Gloria on Solemnities?
Yes. The rubrics call for the singing/recitation of the Glory to God on Sundays (outside of Advent and Lent) as well as Solemnities and Feasts (GIRM 53). The Solemnities of Saint Joseph (March 19) and the Annunciation of the Lord (March 25) fall on weekdays of Lent this year and will be celebrated as solemnities with the use of the Gloria and the Creed.

May laypeople distribute ashes on Ash Wednesday?
Yes. Lay people may assist in the distribution of ashes, but the blessing of ashes is reserved to the priest or deacon (see Book of Blessings, 1659). As with Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, priests and deacons who are present should always distribute and then, if needed, lay people may be invited to assist.

When do we veil statues & crosses?
According to the Roman Missal (see Fifth Sunday of Lent), crosses and statues may be veiled beginning on the Fifth Sunday of Lent (April 7, 2019). Crosses are unveiled following the Celebration of the Lord’s Passion on Good Friday and statues are unveiled prior to the start of the Easter Vigil. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Secretariat for Divine Worship has issued a useful FAQ paper on this topic. You can access it via the Office of Worship website (www.madisondiocese.org/worship). Please note that the veiling of crosses and statues is not mandatory.

Who may read the Passion on Palm Sunday?
According to the Roman Missal (Palm Sunday, 21):

The narrative of the Lord’s Passion is read without candles and without incense, with no greeting or signing of the book. It is read by a Deacon, or, if there is no Deacon, by a Priest. It may also be read by lay readers, with the part of Christ, if possible, reserved to a Priest. [In the Diocese of Madison, the part of Christ is to be read/chanted by a Deacon or Priest.]

Deacons, but not others, ask for the blessing of the Priest before singing the Passion, as at other times before the Gospel.

The Gospels appointed for the day are to be used. A text similar to the Gospel or including accounts from several of the Gospels may not be used. The Passion is not to be reenacted as a drama or play within the liturgy.
THE EASTER TRIDUUM

HOLY THURSDAY

Please note that answers marked with an asterisk (*) are quoted directly from the USCCB’s “Eighteen Questions on the Paschal Triduum.”

**When should the tabernacle be emptied?**
The tabernacle should be empty before the start of the Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper.

**When should the Holy Water fonts be emptied?**
According to a letter from the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments (March 14, 2000; Prot. N. 569/00/L), “The practice of the Church has been to empty the Holy Water fonts on the days of the Sacred Triduum in preparation of the blessing of the water at the Easter Vigil, and it corresponds to those days on which the Eucharist is not celebrated (i.e., Good Friday and Holy Saturday).”

**When may Holy Communion be taken to the sick during the Triduum?**
Holy Communion may be brought to the sick and dying at any time on Holy Thursday and Good Friday. On Holy Saturday, Holy Communion may only be given as viaticum (Communion to the dying) (Roman Missal: Holy Saturday, no. 3).

**May flowers adorn the altar on Holy Thursday?**
Yes (See Roman Missal: Holy Thursday, no. 5).

**May another Mass besides the Mass of the Lord’s Supper be celebrated on Holy Thursday?**
Ordinarily, no other Mass may be celebrated on Holy Thursday [with the exception of the Chrism Mass]. However, by way of exception, the local Ordinary may permit another Mass in churches and oratories to be celebrated in the evening, and, in the case of genuine necessity, even in the morning. Such Masses are provided for those who in no way are able to participate in the evening Mass.

**How are the Holy Oils, consecrated and blessed at the Chrism Mass, to be received in the parish?**
A reception of the oils may take place before the Mass of the Lord’s Supper. The oils, in suitable vessels, can be carried in procession by members of the assembly. A link to this text is available at the Office of Worship’s website.

**Who may have their feet washed on Holy Thursday?**
Men and women, boys and girls. As an interesting sidebar, no rubric states that there must be twelve people. A decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments (January 6, 2016) said:

In order that the full meaning of this rite might be expressed to those who participate it seemed good to the Supreme Pontiff Pope Francis to vary the norm which is found in the rubrics of the Missale Romanum (p. 300 n. 11): ‘The men who have been chosen are led by the ministers…’, which therefore must be changed as follows: ‘Those who are chosen from amongst the people of God are led by the ministers…’ (and consequently in the Caeremonialis Episcoporum n. 301 and n. 299b: ‘seats for those chosen’), so that pastors may select a small group of the faithful to represent the variety and the unity of each part of the people of God. Such small groups can be made up of men and women, and it is appropriate that they consist of people young and old, healthy and sick, clerics, consecrated men and women and laity.
The current rubric for the foot washing does not mention the number 12, but clearly indicates a “small group of the faithful” “who are chosen from amongst the people of God.” Therefore, it is not appropriate to wash the feet of everyone in the congregation. Depending on the way the rite is celebrated locally, five to ten people may be enough. One does not need to be baptized to have his or her feet washed, so someone from among the Elect may be chosen.

It is not permissible to substitute washing hands for the washing of the feet. The ritual of the washing of the feet is not mandatory and may be omitted at the discretion of the pastor.

May we have Communion under both forms on Holy Thursday?
Yes. Communion under both forms seems especially appropriate on this day.

**GOOD FRIDAY**

*When should the Good Friday Celebration of the Lord’s Passion take place?*
Normally it should take place in the afternoon, at about 3:00 PM, to enable people to assemble more easily. However, pastoral discretion may indicate a time shortly after midday, or in the late evening, though never later than 9:00 PM. Depending on the size or nature of a parish or other community, the local Ordinary may permit the service to be repeated.

*Mai a deacon officiate at the Celebration of the Lord’s Passion?*
[No.] Although the Celebration of the Lord's Passion appears to be a service of the Word with the distribution of Holy Communion, the Roman Missal does not permit a deacon to officiate at the celebration. Historically, even though the Eucharist is not celebrated on this day, the liturgy of Good Friday bears resemblance to a Mass. At one time it was called the “Mass of the Presanctified” (referring to the pre-consecrated hosts used at Communion, even when only the priest received Communion). This also is reflected in the prescribed vesture for the priest: stole and chasuble. The liturgy of Good Friday, as an integral part of the Triduum, is linked to the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord’s Supper and the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday. While there may be cases where a parish with multiple churches or chapels (e.g., mission churches or a cluster of parishes under one pastor) might rotate the liturgies among the various locations, it would not be appropriate for a community to celebrate only part of the Triduum.

*Does the Church encourage any other liturgical celebrations on Good Friday?*
On this day the Office of Readings and Morning Prayer could appropriately be celebrated with the participation of the people in the churches. Note that Evening Prayer is only prayed by those who do not participate in the Celebration of the Lord’s Passion.

*Do devotions have a particular importance on Good Friday?*

Clearly the central celebration of this day is the Good Friday Celebration of the Lord’s Passion. In no way should manifestations of popular piety, either by the time or manner in which they are convoked, substitute for this solemn liturgical action. Nor should aspects of the various acts of piety be mixed with the Good Friday celebration, creating a hybrid. In recent times, Passion processions, celebrations of the Stations of the Cross, and Passion Plays have become more common. In such representations, actors and spectators can be involved in a moment of faith and genuine piety. Care should be taken, however, to point out to the faithful that a Passion Play is a representation which is commemorative and they are very different from “liturgical actions” which are anamnesis, or the mysterious presence of the redemptive event of the Passion.”
*How does the Adoration of the Holy Cross on Good Friday begin?
The Adoration of the Holy Cross begins with one of two forms of the Showing of the Holy Cross. The First Form begins as the deacon or another suitable minister goes to the sacristy and obtains the veiled Cross. Accompanied by two ministers with lighted candles, the veiled Cross is brought to the center of the sanctuary in procession. The priest accepts the Cross and then, standing in front of the altar and facing the people, uncovers the upper part of the Cross, the right arm, and then the entire Cross. Each time he unveils a part of the Cross, he sings the acclamation, Behold the wood of the Cross. In the Second Form of the Showing of the Holy Cross, the priest or deacon goes to the church door, where he takes up the uncovered Cross. Accompanied by two ministers with lighted candles, he processes to the sanctuary, stopping at the door of the church, in the middle of the church, and before entering the sanctuary, to sing the acclamation, Behold the wood of the Cross.

*How is the cross venerated by members of the congregation on Good Friday?
After the showing of the Cross, the priest or deacon may carry the Cross to the entrance of the sanctuary or another suitable place. The first person to adore the Cross is the priest celebrant. If circumstances suggest, he takes off his chasuble and his shoes. The clergy, lay ministers and the faithful then approach the Cross. The personal adoration of the Cross is an important feature in this celebration and every effort should be made to achieve it. The rubrics remind us that “only one Cross” should be used for adoration. If the numbers are so great that all cannot come forward, the priest, after some of the clergy and faithful have adored the Cross, can take it and stand in the center before the altar. In a few words he invites the people to adore the Cross. He then elevates the Cross higher for a brief period of time while the faithful adore it in silence. It should also be kept in mind that when a sufficiently large Cross is used even a large community can reverence it in due time. The foot of the Cross as well as the right and left arm can be approached and venerated. Coordination with ushers and planning the flow of people beforehand can allow for this part of the liturgy to be celebrated with decorum and devotion.

THE EASTER VIGIL

*When should the Easter Vigil take place?
The Vigil, by its very nature, must take place at night. It is not begun before nightfall and should end before daybreak on Easter Sunday. The celebration of the Easter Vigil takes the place of the Office of Readings of Easter Sunday. The Easter Vigil begins and ends in darkness. It is a nocturnal vigil, retaining its ancient character of vigilance and expectation, as the Christian people await the Resurrection of the Lord during the night. Fire is blessed and the paschal candle is lighted to illumine the night so that all may hear the Easter proclamation and listen to the word of God proclaimed in the Scriptures. For this reason the Solemn Beginning of the Vigil (Lucernarium) takes place before the Liturgy of the Word. Since sunset varies at different locations throughout the country, local weather stations can be consulted as to the time of sunset in the area, keeping in mind that twilight concludes (i.e., nightfall occurs) somewhat later.

Sunset on Holy Saturday, April 11, 2020, will be at 7:35 p.m. in Madison. In the Diocese of Madison, the Easter Vigil may begin at 8:00 p.m. (or later). The sunset is a few minutes later west of Madison, so western parishes may want to wait until 8:15 or 8:30 p.m.

*What considerations should be given for the paschal candle used at the Easter Vigil?
This candle should be made of wax, never be artificial, be replaced each year, be only one in number, and be of sufficiently large size that it may convey the truth that Christ is the light of the world. The paschal candle is the symbol of the light of Christ, rising in glory, scattering the darkness of our hearts and minds.
Above all, the paschal candle should be a genuine candle, the pre-eminent symbol of the light of Christ. Choice of size, design, and color should be made in relationship to the sanctuary in which it will be placed.

*In the case of mission churches and cluster parishes, can multiple paschal candles be used for the Service of Light?*

The Roman Missal, not envisioning the pastoral situation of mission churches or cluster parishes, specifies that only one paschal candle is used. To accommodate the particular circumstances, the [USCCB] Secretariat of Divine Worship might suggest that the candles from the mission churches or other parish churches could be present at the Easter Vigil, having been prepared in advance, and blessed alongside the main candle (perhaps having deacons or other representatives holding them). In keeping with the rubrics, for the lighting and procession only one candle should be lit (the principal one, or the one which will remain in that particular church). As the other candles in the congregation are lit, the other paschal candles could be lit and held (but not high, in order to maintain the prominence of the one principal candle) by someone at their place in the assembly. Once all the candles are extinguished after the singing of the *Exsultet*, the other paschal candles are put aside. On Easter Sunday morning, those candles could be taken to each of the missions and carried, lit, in the entrance procession at the first Mass at each church and put in place in the sanctuary.

**Who may chant the Easter Proclamation (Exsultet)?**

A Deacon should chant the Exsultet, if he is able to do so well. If not, and if the priest can not chant well, a lay person with the proper skill may do so. The intent is for this to be chanted, so every effort should be made to have it sung by someone who can sing well and be understood by all. (See *Roman Missal: The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night*, nos. 18 and 19.)

**How many readings should be proclaimed at the Easter Vigil?**

One of the unique aspects of the Easter Vigil is the recounting of the outstanding deeds of the history of salvation. These deeds are related in seven readings from the Old Testament chosen from the law and the prophets and two readings from the New Testament, namely from the Apostle Paul and from the Gospel. Thus, the Lord meets us once again on our journey and, “beginning with Moses and all the prophets” (Lk 24:27) opens up our minds and hearts, preparing us to share in the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup. The faithful are encouraged to meditate on these readings by the singing of a responsorial psalm, followed by a silent pause, and then by the celebrant’s prayer. Meditation on these readings is so significant for this night that we are strongly urged to use all the readings whenever it can be done. Only in the case of grave pastoral circumstances can the number of readings be reduced. In such cases, at least three readings from the Old Testament should be read, always including Exodus 14.

**Does the pastor need to request the permission of the Bishop to Confirm a previously-baptized adult Catholic at the Easter Vigil?**

No. The Bishop must grant permission for pastors to Confirm, but Bishop Morlino has done so through “Faculties and Norms for Priests and Deacons in the Diocese of Madison (March 20, 2008)” (see Part III):

> By virtue of the authority given to him by the *Code of Canon Law* (1983), the Most Reverend Bishop grants the following faculties within the confines of the parish to which they are assigned unless otherwise stated:

> 5. To pastors or parochial vicars, to administer validly and licitly the Sacrament of Confirmation to adult Catholics within the parish at the Easter Vigil without the written permission of the Bishop… *(emphasis in original)*

**How is the First Communion of the neophytes to be emphasized during the Easter Vigil?**

The celebrant, before he says, Behold the Lamb of God, may make a brief remark to the neophytes about their first Communion and about the importance of so great a mystery, which is the climax of initiation
and the center of the Christian life. This is a night when all should be able to receive Holy Communion under both forms.

In the Diocese of Madison, Communion may be given under both forms according to the discretion of the Pastor. Even if the whole assembly does not receive under both forms, the neophytes may be offered the Precious Blood.

**EASTER SUNDAY**

*What directions are given for the celebration of Masses on Easter Sunday?*
Mass is to be celebrated on Easter Day with great solemnity. A full complement of ministers and the use of liturgical music should be evident in all celebrations. On Easter Sunday in the dioceses of the United States, the rite of the renewal of baptismal promises may take place after the homily, followed by the sprinkling with water blessed at the Vigil, during which the antiphon *Vidi aquam*, or some other song of baptismal character should be sung. (If the renewal of baptismal promises does not occur, then the Creed is said. The Roman Missal notes that the Apostles' Creed, “the baptismal Symbol of the Roman Church,” might be appropriately used during Easter Time.) The holy water fonts at the entrance to the church should also be filled with the same water. On the subsequent Sundays of Easter, it is appropriate that the Rite for the Blessing and Sprinkling of Water take the place of the Penitential Act.

**Do we need to include the Easter Sequence?**
Yes. According to the GIRM (64) it is required on Easter Sunday and on Pentecost. It is optional on the weekdays of the Easter Octave and on Divine Mercy Sunday. Sequences are ancient texts based upon non-Biblical poetry. The Sequence for Easter is one of only four that has remained in the Church’s repertoire for centuries and it tells the account of Mary Magdalene and Jesus in the garden. It may be sung by the entire congregation, the choir or a cantor and most hymnals have a setting for the Easter Sequence. Every effort should be made to sing the Sequence.

*Where is the paschal candle placed during Easter Time?*
The paschal candle has its proper place either by the ambo or by the altar and should be lit at least in all the more solemn liturgical celebrations of the season until Pentecost Sunday, whether at Mass, or at Morning and Evening Prayer. After Easter Time the candle should be kept with honor in the baptistery, so that in the celebration of Baptism the candles of the baptized may be lit from it. In the celebration of funerals the paschal candle should be placed near the coffin to indicate Christ’s undying presence, his victory over sin and death, and the promise of sharing in Christ’s victory by virtue of being part of the Body of Christ (see *Order of Christian Funerals*, no. 35). The paschal candle should not otherwise be lit nor placed in the sanctuary outside Easter Time. [editor’s note: Please notice the Paschal Candle is not removed until after Mass(es) on Pentecost Sunday. The older practice of removing it on Ascension Day is no longer the norm.]