

# NOTES ON THE LITURGY

Office of Divine Worship - Archdiocese of Newark

## Proclaiming the Lord's Passion

### The Proclamation of the Passion

On both Palm Sunday and Good Friday, "The passion narrative occupies a special place. It should be sung or read in the traditional way, that is, by three persons who take the part of Christ, the narrator and the people. The passion is proclaimed by deacons or priests, or by lay readers; in the latter case, the part of Christ should be reserved to the priest.

"The proclamation of the passion should be without candles and incense, the greeting and the sign of the cross are omitted; only a deacon asks for the blessing, as he does before the Gospel. For the spiritual good of the faithful the passion should be proclaimed in its entirety, and the readings which precede it should **not** be omitted." Although the passion reading is lengthy, "After the passion has been proclaimed, a homily is to be given." (*Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Paschal Feasts*, 33-34)

As at all Masses, the proclamation of the Scriptures, including and especially the Passion of the Lord, is never to be replaced with any other medium (e.g. videos, dramatic interpretations, etc.) The Liturgy of the Word on both Palm Sunday and Good Friday follows the usual format of first reading, responsorial psalm, second reading, Gospel acclamation and the Passion of the Lord. The passion is never to be proclaimed at any other time during the liturgy, such as during Communion, etc.



### Role of the Assembly

The proclamation of the Scriptures was never meant to be divided into parts read by the entire assembly. Though this practice has been encouraged in missalettes, the assembly should be listening to the proclamation rather than reading along with it, waiting for their opportunity to shout, "crucify him!" Sections of the passion may be separated with periods of silent reflection or acclamations which all can sing. The posture for the proclamation of the Gospel, including the passion, is standing.

### Interfaith Considerations

Consideration should be given to the representation of the Jewish people in the passion narratives as noted:

"The Gospels are the outcome of long and complicated editorial work. The dogmatic constitution *Dei Verbum* distinguished three stages: "The sacred authors wrote the four Gospels, selecting some things from the many which had been handed on by word of mouth or in writing, reducing some of them to a synthesis, explicating some things in view of the situation of their Churches, and preserving the form of proclamation, but always in such fashion that they told us the honest truth about Jesus" (19).

"Hence, it cannot be ruled out that some references hostile or less than favorable to the Jews have their historical context in conflicts between the nascent Church and the Jewish community. Certain controversies reflect Christian-Jewish relations long after the time of Jesus. To establish this is of capital importance if we wish to bring out the meaning of certain Gospel texts for the Christians of today. All this should be taken into account when preparing catechesis and homilies for the last weeks of Lent and Holy Week."

Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church, Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, June 24, 1985, 21a.