



Word Worship^{on}

Newsletter of the Worship Office, Archdiocese of Newark, NJ

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The newly issued post-synodal exhortation Sacramentum Caritatis highlights Pope Benedict's ongoing concern for the liturgy. Last August, the Holy Father spoke with the priests of Albano, Italy, in which he gave the following comments on the Mass.

ON THE PREPARATION OF THE HOMILY

At the synod of bishops last year, the fathers spoke a great deal about the homily, pointing out how difficult it is today to find the “bridge” between the word of the New Testament, written two thousand years ago, and the present time.

I must say that historical-critical exegesis is often not of sufficient help to us in preparing the homily. I notice this myself when trying to prepare homilies that make the word of God relevant, or better – since the word of God has an intrinsic relevance – to make the people see and feel this relevance. Historical-critical exegesis says a lot about the past, about the time when the words were born and on what they meant at the time of Jesus’ apostles, but it does not always bring us sufficient help in understanding that the

words of Jesus, of the apostles, and also of the Old Testament are spirit and life: in them, the Lord still speaks today.

I think that we must “challenge” the theologians – and the synod did this – to move forward, to give better help to the pastors in preparing their homilies, to make the presence of the word visible: the Lord speaks with me today, and not only in the past. I have read, in recent days, the plan for the post-synodal apostolic exhortation. And it was with a sense of satisfaction that I saw that this “challenge” to prepare models of the homily recurs there.

ON THE ART OF CELEBRATING THE MASS

In his “Rule,” Saint Benedict says to the monks, speaking of the recitation of the Psalms: “*Mens concordet voci,*” the heart should be in accord with the voice, with the words. [...] The Sacred Liturgy gives us the words; we must enter into these words, and find a harmony with this reality that precedes us.

Apart from this, we should also learn to understand the structure of the liturgy, and why it is arranged as it is. The liturgy developed over two millennia, and even after the reform [of Vatican Council II] it did not become something concocted by a few liturgists. It remains always the continuation of that perennial unfolding of adoration and proclamation. And so it is very important, in order to attune ourselves, that we

understand this structure that has developed through time and enter with our minds into the “voice” of the Church. [...]

This is the first condition: we ourselves must interiorize the structure, the words of the liturgy, the word of God. Thus our celebration really becomes a celebration together with the Church: our hearts are opened wider, and we are not just performing any sort of act, but we are joined with the Church in conversation with God. It seems to me that the people sense whether we are truly in conversation with God and with them, and are drawing others into our common prayer and into the communion of the children of God, or whether we are just going through the motions. The fundamental element of the true “*ars celebrandi*” is this harmony, this concord between what we say with our lips and what we think in our hearts. [...]

In other words, the “*ars celebrandi*” is meant as an invitation, not to some sort of theater or spectacle, but to an interiority that makes itself felt and becomes acceptable and evident to those present. Only if they see that this is not an external, showy “*ars*” – we are not actors! – but the expression of the journey of our hearts, which also draws their hearts, only then does the liturgy become beautiful, it becomes the communion of all those present with the Lord.

Naturally, to this fundamental condition expressed in the words of Saint Benedict

POPE BENEDICT XVI

COMMENTS ON THE LITURGY

“*Mens concordet voci*” – the heart should be truly raised up, elevated to the Lord – external things must be added as well. We must learn to pronounce the words well. Sometimes, when I was still a professor in my own country, the young people read the Sacred Scripture [at Mass]. And they read it as one reads the text of a poet one does not understand. Naturally, to learn to pronounce well, one must first understand the dramatic nature of the text, its immediacy. So also with the

preface. And the eucharistic prayer. It is difficult for the faithful to follow a text as long as that of our eucharistic prayer. This leads to the birth of certain “inventions.” But the constant creation of new eucharistic prayers does not address the problem. The problem is that this is a moment that should also invite others to silence with God and prayer with God. So things can go better only if the eucharistic prayer is pronounced well, which includes the appropriate

moments of silence, if it is pronounced with interior devotion, but also with refinement of speech. [...] I think we must also find opportunities in catechesis, homilies, and on other occasions, to explain this eucharistic prayer thoroughly to the people of God, so that they can follow its major outlines – the recounting of the words of institution, the prayer for the living and the dead, the giving of thanks to the Lord, the epiclesis – to achieve the community’s genuine

involvement in this prayer.

So the words must be pronounced well. There must also be adequate preparation. The acolytes must know what to do, the lectors must truly understand how to pronounce the words. And then the choir, the singing, must be prepared, and the altar must be decorated well. All of this is part – even if it’s a matter of many practical things – of that “*ars celebrandi*” that [...] is the art of entering into communion with the Lord.

DOING IT RITE

FIVE QUESTIONS ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION FROM THE TABERNACLE

1. Should Holy Communion be regularly distributed from the tabernacle?

No. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) makes clear that "it is most desirable that the faithful, just as the priest himself is bound to do, receive the Lord’s Body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and that, in the instances when it is permitted, they partake of the chalice,¹ so that even by means of the signs Communion will stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated."²

2. How is the participation of the faithful more clearly expressed by the reception of hosts consecrated at the same Mass?

This participation is manifested in the two great processions of the faithful at Mass. In the presentation of the gifts first, the faithful present the bread and wine for the sacrifice along with the gift of their very lives. The very same bread and wine which they have offered is then consecrated by the action of the priest and returned to them as the Body and Blood of their Lord when they come forward in procession to receive Holy Communion.

3. What is the primary purpose of reserving consecrated hosts in the tabernacle?

Consecrated hosts are reserved in the tabernacle for the administration of viaticum, the communion of the sick and adoration of the Most Holy Eucharist outside Mass.

4. What are the roots of the preference for the distribution of hosts consecrated at the same Mass?

In 1742, Pope Benedict XIV urging the promotion of frequent reception of Holy Communion, highlights the reception of Holy Communion consecrated at the same Mass when "one and the same sacrifice is shared" by the priest and the faithful. This teaching was echoed by Pope Pius XII in his 1947 encyclical on the liturgy, commending those who "when present at Mass, receive hosts consecrated at the same Mass, so that it is actually verified, ‘that as many of us, as, at this altar, shall partake of and receive the most holy Body and Blood of thy Son, may be filled with every heavenly blessing and grace’ (Encyclical letter *Mediator Dei*, 121). The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council thus taught: "that more complete form of participation in the Mass by which the faithful, after the priest’s communion, receive the

Lord’s Body from the sacrifice, is strongly endorsed." (Cf. *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass* (HCWEOM), 7; *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, 49.

5. How can this goal be practically achieved?

Pastors who have implemented this provision advise that the first step is the acceptance of the ideal of enabling the faithful to receive hosts consecrated in the same Mass. The training of sacristans, ushers, greeters and other ministers in determining the approximate size of the congregation has also been helpful in this regard.

Reprinted from the December 2006 Bishop’s Committee on the Liturgy *Newsletter*.

¹ Cf. GIRM, 283; *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America*.

² GIRM, 85; cf. *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, 31, 32, and *Immensae Caritatis*, 267-268.

³ Cf. GIRM, 44.

⁴ Cf. *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass* (HCWEOM), 7; *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, 49.

⁵ *Certiores Effecti*, 7.

⁶ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 55.

⁷ Cf. *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 89.

⁸ Cf. HCWEOM, 7.

QUESTIONS ON THE EASTER VIGIL

HOW MANY EASTER VIGIL CELEBRATIONS MAY A PARISH HAVE?

Each parish church is to have only one celebration of the Easter Vigil. This directive is liturgical law and can be found in the *Sacramentary* and in the *Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Paschal Feasts*, 94:

“The celebration of the Easter Vigil for special groups is not to be encouraged, since above all in this vigil the faithful should *come together as one* and should experience a sense of ecclesial community.”

For many people, it comes as a surprise that a parish would even think of having more than one Vigil celebration, and it should. After all, this liturgy is not only awesome and inspiring but also lengthy and complex. Still, some parishes are faced with unique pastoral situations such as Masses in different languages or multiple worship sites in a particular parish. Some of these issues will be looked at in more detail below, but to answer this question, it is enough to state that there is to be one and only one Easter Vigil celebration in each parish.

WHY CAN THERE BE ONLY ONE VIGIL?

The purpose of celebrating the liturgies of the Church is always to give witness to the faith as a community, not as an individual or private group. Liturgical celebrations are public acts, open to all members of the Church. The

Easter Vigil, being the liturgy *par excellence*, is above all meant to gather the entire people of a parish community to celebrate the Paschal Mystery in its fullness. Masses are not permitted on Holy Saturday; priests are not permitted to celebrate private Masses. In order to participate in the Eucharist on Holy Saturday, one must attend the Easter Vigil.

The power of the gathered assembly in prayer fuels the life of the Church. There is even a sense of the universal People of God gathered together for this special night in the texts for the Vigil found in the *Sacramentary* itself:

Dear friends in Christ, on this most holy night, when our Lord Jesus Christ passed from death to new life, the Church invites its sons and daughters throughout the world to come together in vigil and prayer. (p 171)

Ideally, every community ought to gather in its entirety each Sunday for Mass, but due to the large size of many parishes and a certain pastoral sensitivity to the schedules of people, multiple Sunday Masses are offered. This is not to be the case for the Easter Vigil when, on these very special holy days, we return to our roots as a people of faith gathered together in one assembly.

It would obviously be inauthentic to repeat the rites

particular to the Easter Vigil. It makes no liturgical sense to bless a fire and light a candle for use throughout the year and then extinguish it afterwards and start over again with the same candle as if the first blessing did not take. Consider the illogic of blessing gallons of water for Easter and then pretending like it was not done and repeating the process in another Vigil a few hours later. The rites particular to the Easter Vigil are meant to be binding on the entire community *whether or not every member is present*.

IS THE VIGIL A SATURDAY NIGHT MASS FOR EASTER SUNDAY?

The Easter Vigil is never to be compared to a Saturday evening anticipated Mass, but rather, it is in itself its own unique liturgy. The Vigil is *not* an anticipated Mass for Easter Sunday; however, attendance at the Easter Vigil *does* fulfill the Easter Sunday obligation.

“‘The entire celebration of the Easter Vigil takes place at night. It should not begin before nightfall; it should end before daybreak on Sunday.’ (Roman Missal p. 170) 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.” (*Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and*

Celebration of the Paschal Feasts, 78).

No Masses whatsoever are to be celebrated on Holy Saturday before the Easter Vigil, and the Easter Vigil may never be celebrated until well after sunset on Holy Saturday. In the northeastern USA, this would mean after 8 PM and possibly as late as 8:30 PM.

CAN THERE BE AN EASTER MASS ON SATURDAY NIGHT AFTER THE EASTER VIGIL HAS CONCLUDED?

Yes. “In the United States, although it is never permitted to celebrate the entire Easter Vigil more than once in a given church or to anticipate the Mass of Easter before the vigil, in those places where the local Ordinary permits the anticipation of the Sunday Masses on Saturday evening, for pastoral reasons an additional Mass may be celebrated after the Mass of the Easter Vigil. Such a Mass may follow the liturgy of the word of the Easter Vigil...and should include the renewal of baptismal promises.” (*Sacramentary*, p 170).

Once the Easter Vigil has been completed, Masses of Easter may be celebrated, even if it is still Saturday evening or very early Sunday morning. However, this should in no way affect the starting time of the Easter Vigil, which is to be at least 30 minutes after sunset.

It should be clear that the rites particular to the

Easter Vigil are *not* to be repeated at any other Easter Mass. This means that at any Mass following the Vigil, there would be no service of light, no proclamation of the exsultet, no full initiation of the Elect, no blessing of Easter water. The paschal candle is lighted before the Mass starts and would remain in its place near the ambo for the entire liturgy.¹ It may be incensed at the beginning of Mass.

As stated in the rubric above, an extended liturgy of the word as at the Vigil would be permissible at an Easter Mass following the Vigil on Saturday evening. Required at all Easter Masses by the *Sacramentary* is the renewal of baptismal promises and sprinkling rite.

HOW LONG SHOULD THE EASTER VIGIL LAST?

The Easter Vigil should be as long as it takes to meaningfully and fully celebrate the rites of this special night. Given the additional rites of the Vigil and the likely presence of the Elect for full initiation, it should easily take a minimum of two hours to celebrate. This should not be looked upon as a burden.

A successful Easter Vigil is not determined by how short it is, but by how short it feels. It is necessary to create a sense of flow in any liturgy, but especially one as lengthy as the Easter Vigil. This ordinarily requires some rehearsal on the part of the liturgical ministers, including the presider and the RCIA sponsors (but not the Elect themselves who should experience it unrehearsed). When ministers know what they are doing; when items are in the right place before the

Vigil begins; when musicians are aware of proper cues, a sense of flow ensues and awareness of earthly time (*kronos*) will fade as the assembly enters God's time (*kairos*).

WHAT ARE SOME CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE EASTER VIGIL IN MULTI-LINGUAL PARISHES?

Parishes which ordinarily have Masses in multiple languages should still have only one celebration of the Easter Vigil. The parish can make use of multiple languages during the liturgy, but there may be only one Vigil. Considering the many readings, psalms, prayers and musical needs of this liturgy, there are ample opportunities to use more than one language.

As stated above, Easter Masses may be celebrated any time after the Easter Vigil is completed. This would include a Mass after the Vigil in a language other than that used at the Vigil itself. However, as also stated above, none of the rites particular to the Easter Vigil may be repeated, and full initiation of the Elect is only to be celebrated at the Easter Vigil.

WHAT ARE SOME CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE EASTER VIGIL IF A PARISH HAS MORE THAN ONE WORSHIP SITE?

In these times of closings and mergers, a parish may have more than one worship site. An individual parish with more than one church building needs to take this into consideration when planning the Easter Triduum because even in this situation, ideally only one Vigil may occur.

As stated in the *Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation*

and Celebration of the Paschal Feasts: "It would be desirable if on occasion provision were made for several communities to assemble in one church wherever their proximity one to another or small numbers mean that a full and festive celebration could not otherwise take place." (94)

"Further, it is fitting that small religious communities, both clerical and lay, and other lay groups should participate in the celebration of the Easter Triduum in neighboring principal churches. Similarly, where the number of participants and ministers is so small that the celebrations of the Easter Triduum cannot be carried out with the requisite solemnity, such groups of the faithful should assemble in a larger church. Also, where there are small parishes with only one priest it is recommended that such parishes should assemble, as far as possible, in a principal church and there participate in the celebrations." (43)

This statement indicates that parishes which are merged should come together as a single entity to celebrate this holy night.²

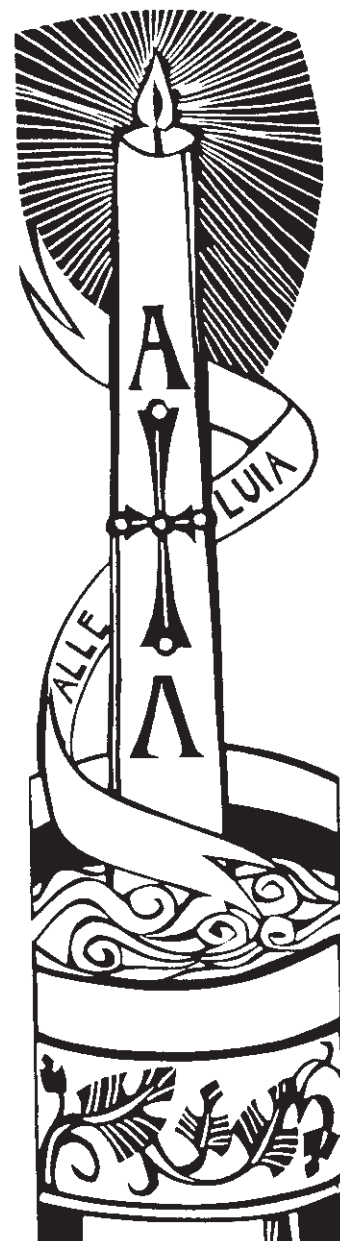
MAY MORE THAN ONE PASCHAL CANDLE BE BLESSED AT AN EASTER VIGIL CELEBRATION?

No. "The paschal candle should be prepared, which for effective symbolism must be made of wax, never be artificial, be renewed each year, *be only one in number*, and be of sufficiently large size so that it may evoke the truth that Christ is the light of the world." (*Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Paschal Feasts*, 82)

The Church does not envision multiple paschal candles at the

Easter Vigil. The multiplication of symbols would have a negative effect on the Vigil, causing confusion and even diffusing the symbolic power of the paschal candle itself.

Consider the sign value of the paschal candle. It represents Christ, the light of the world, as it leads the assembly into the darkened church. It reminds the people of the pillar of light leading the Israelites out of Egypt. The power of a single light in the darkness leading God's people is lost when there are multiple paschal candles. The practice of using multiple paschal



candles for any reason is incongruent with the Church's liturgical practices.

Certainly a worship space in which baptisms and funerals take place must have a paschal candle, and it should be renewed each year. However, if there is no Easter Vigil at the site of a particular worship space, the candle should be replaced for the first liturgy of Easter Sunday and need only be lit before Mass begins. It may be incensed during the opening rites.

Note: In a parish with multiple worship sites, no Easter Masses may take place at any of the sites until that parish's Easter Vigil is completed.

DO ALL THE READINGS OF THE EASTER VIGIL NEED TO BE READ?

"The restored order for the vigil has seven readings from the Old Testament, chosen from the Law and the Prophets, which are everywhere in use according to the most ancient tradition of East and West, and two readings from the New Testament, namely from the Apostle and from the Gospel. Thus the church, 'beginning with Moses and all the prophets' explains Christ's paschal mystery.

Consequently, wherever this is possible all the readings should be read in order that the character of the Easter Vigil, which demands that it be somewhat prolonged, be respected at all costs.

"Where, however, pastoral conditions require that the number of readings be reduced, there should be at least three readings from the Old Testament, taken from the Law and the Prophets, and the reading from Exodus 14 with its canticle must never be

omitted." (*Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Paschal Feasts*, 85)

Only in the most exceptional of cases should one eliminate a significant number of readings. A military setting, for example, might be a case where the readings would need to be significantly reduced, but certainly not a parish setting. Recall that the Easter Vigil is not an anticipated Mass for Easter Sunday, but rather it is a true vigil. Ancient vigils included lengthy readings from the scriptures.

The setting of the readings must follow the liturgy of the Church as well, meaning that the reading is to be proclaimed, followed by the appropriate psalm (or a significant period of silence) and the appropriate collect is prayed by the presider.

Settings of the readings which do not follow this format or the official readings and texts of the *Lectionary for Mass* and the *Sacramentary* should not be used. Further, electronic media such as videos, slideshows or dramatic presentations should never replace the proclamation of the Scriptures at the Vigil (or at any other liturgy of the Church).

DO REAL WAX CANDLES HAVE TO BE USED AT THE EASTER VIGIL?

Yes. Electric candles, flashlights and other such accoutrements should never be used to replace the wax paschal candle or tapers given to the members of the assembly. Inauthentic symbols compromise the liturgy.

IS THE LITANY OF THE SAINTS SUNG AT THE EASTER VIGIL EVEN WHEN THERE IS NO ONE

TO BE BAPTIZED ?

Two questions need to be asked when deciding the answer to this question:

1. Does the worship site have a canonical rite to a font?³
2. Will baptism take place at the Vigil?

If the answer to either or both of these questions is "yes," then the litany is sung.

If the worship site has no rite to a font, that is, it is a chapel where baptisms do not take place, and if no one is to be baptized at the Vigil, the litany is not sung. (However, even where there is no font, water is always blessed at the Vigil for the renewal of baptismal promises and sprinkling rite).

CAN A BAPTIZED CATHOLIC BE CONFIRMED AT THE EASTER VIGIL?

No. In the Archdiocese of Newark, the required delegation is not given to confirm baptized Catholics at the Easter Vigil.

Upon written request, delegation is given only to *pastors* to confirm adult baptized Catholics (18 years or older) on any of the Sundays of Easter, *including Easter Sunday itself and Pentecost*.

Baptized Catholics under the age of 18 must be confirmed by a bishop.

Adult non-Catholics who are validly baptized may be brought into full communion and confirmed at the Easter Vigil, but this is not a preferred practice. Baptism is intrinsic to the Easter Vigil. It would be better to baptize⁴ an infant at the Easter Vigil, even though the infant would not be fully initiated, than to receive a

baptized non-Catholic into full communion with the Church.

Baptized non-Catholics may be received into full communion and confirmed on one of the Sundays of Easter (or even a Sunday of Ordinary Time). Any priest may receive and confirm a baptized non-Catholic; no delegation is required.

¹ The blessed fire of the Vigil could be maintained for the 50 days of Easter by using the flame from the paschal candle at the Vigil to light the tabernacle lamp and taking the flame from there to light the paschal candle at all Masses and liturgical services during the 50 days of Easter.

² A possible pastoral approach could be to alternate the location used for the Vigil between the worship sites from year to year. Also, all three of the Triduum liturgies do not have to take place in the same location, so, for example, the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper and/or the Celebration of the Lord's Passion could take place at one worship site in the parish and the Easter Vigil at another. Consideration should also be given to the celebration of the Easter sacraments; does one worship site have a font that is more suitable for baptizing adults?

³ In other words, is the worship site a place where baptisms ordinarily take place, or is it a chapel in a hospital or other place where baptisms are not ordinarily celebrated.

⁴ "The third part of the vigil is the baptismal liturgy. Christ's passover and ours is now celebrated. This is given full expression in those churches which have a baptismal font and more so when the Christian initiation of adults is held or at least the baptism of infants." (*Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Paschal Feasts*, 88)

THE EASTER TRIDUUM AND THE EUCHARIST

THE EUCHARIST DURING THE EASTER TRIDUUM

On Holy Thursday, the tabernacle should be empty prior to the start of the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper. During the Mass, enough hosts should be consecrated for distribution both Thursday night and at the Good Friday celebration of the Lord's Passion. Good Friday is the only time that the Church endorses distributing communion to the assembly from the tabernacle. Consecrated wine is never to be reserved for distribution on Good Friday.

At the end of the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist is processed to the place of reservation. This may be the tabernacle proper or another place that has been prepared to reserve the Eucharist. The Eucharist is reposed inside a locked tabernacle immediately after the procession, but normally the place of reservation is available for visits by the faithful until midnight. **The Eucharist remains in the place of reservation until it is retrieved at the appropriate time during the Good Friday celebration of the Lord's Passion.** The Eucharist is never exposed on Holy Thursday night or any other time during the Easter Triduum.

On Good Friday, "in accordance with ancient tradition, the Church does not celebrate the Eucharist: Holy

Communion is distributed to the faithful during the celebration of the Lord's Passion alone, though it may be brought at any time of the day to the sick who cannot take part in the celebration." (*Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Paschal Feasts*, 59)

After communion at the celebration of the Lord's Passion, the remaining hosts are consumed. Some may be kept in a safe place for the sick, but the tabernacle (and the place of reservation) is to remain empty from the end of the Good Friday service until after Communion at the Easter Vigil.

On Holy Saturday, "the church abstains strictly from celebration of the sacrifice of the Mass. Holy Communion may only be given in the form of viaticum. The celebration of marriages is forbidden, as also the celebration of other sacraments, except those of penance and the anointing of the sick." (*Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Paschal Feasts*, 75)

At the beginning of the Easter Vigil, the tabernacle should be empty. Enough hosts should be consecrated for all those present at the Vigil. At the end of the Easter Vigil Mass, any remaining hosts may be reserved in the tabernacle.

Ministers of Communion and First Communion

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should not be installed at any of the liturgies of the Easter Triduum, including the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper. Neither should first Communion be celebrated on Holy Thursday. "It is not particularly appropriate for first Communion to be celebrated on Holy Thursday of the Lord's Supper. Another day should be chosen instead, such as a Sunday between the Second and the Sixth Sunday of Easter, or the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, or the Sundays of Ordinary Time, since Sunday is rightly regarded as the day of the Eucharist." (*Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 87)

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament is **prohibited** during the Easter Triduum, even in places where "perpetual adoration" is held. "Under no circumstances may perpetual exposition take place during the Easter Triduum" (*Thirty-One Questions on Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament*, 26) The Eucharist is not to be exposed from before Morning Prayer on Holy Thursday through Evening Prayer of Easter Sunday.

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 to stand.

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.)

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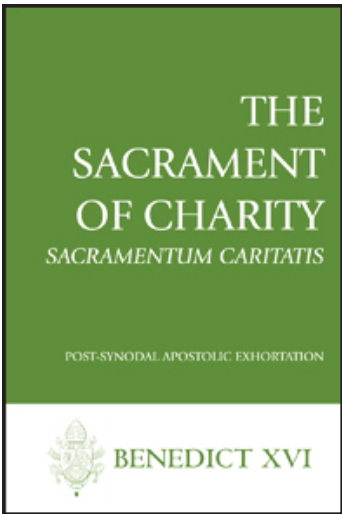
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The long awaited post-synodal exhortation on the Eucharist from Pope Benedict XVI is now available in book form in both English and Spanish. In this document, the Holy Father covers topics such as The Eucharist and the Church, Beauty and the Liturgy, and The Structure of the Eucharistic Celebration. "Pope Benedict teaches that the Eucharist finds its source within the wellspring of love that is the Trinity, the love that is so abundantly expressed in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and in the new life of the Holy Spirit that flows into the hearts of those who participate in his sacrifice and receive him in Communion." - Bp William Skylstad

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