

Liturgy Office Newsletter – Spring 2024



Walking into church this week, you may see statues, crosses and images veiled in purple. The Roman Missal states (p280) that on the Fifth Sunday of Lent 'The practice of covering crosses and images throughout the church from Sunday may be observed, if the Conference of Bishops so decides. Crosses remain covered until the end of the celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday, but images remain covered until the beginning of the Easter Vigil.'

The practice of veiling images tells us that something is different, but the last two weeks of Lent are a time of immediate preparation for the celebration of the Sacred Triduum. The veils are hard to miss and they serve as a reminder to get ready!

The veils may seem out of place, 'wrong' somehow, and even counterintuitive, but these veiled images can build within us a hunger for Easter Sunday. It can seem strange that the crucifix is covered up during Passiontide; however, through this absence of images our senses are heightened and we become more aware of what is missing. Similarly, the absence of flowers on the altar and the suppression of the Alleluia during Lent effectively demonstrates that we are in exile from our true Home, where the angels sing Alleluia without ceasing.

This is the current practice of the Church, but veiling from the Fifth Sunday of Lent onward is minuscule compared to what was once practiced. For example, in Germany there was a tradition to veil the altar from view throughout all of Lent, but some authors say there was a practical reason for this insofar as the often-illiterate faithful needed a way to know it was Lent.

So, if your parish follows the practice of covering images and statues in the last two weeks of Lent, (note that the Roman Missal says this **may** be observed, not **must** or **should** be observed) you can rest assured that there is, in fact, a good reason for this; it is not simply an out-dated or old-fashioned practice – it is to help us journey more effectively to the great celebration of Easter.

If we have failed to keep up our Lenten resolutions we shouldn't despair, there is still time to pick them up again. Whatever we decided, or failed, to do we can keep the three pillars of Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving at the forefront of our minds for this last couple of weeks. And we shouldn't do things that will only make us miserable; we can look on Lent as a gift as it gives us the opportunity to prepare fully to celebrate the Season of Easter.

Chrism Mass



Our annual Chrism Mass, when Bishop Declan will bless the Oil of the Sick and the Oil of Catechumens and consecrate the Oil of Chrism - all of which will be used throughout the diocese in the coming year - will take place in our cathedral on Wednesday 27 March at 11am. This is a wonderful experience of the family of the diocese coming together to celebrate Mass just before we begin the Holy Paschal Triduum. If you have never taken part in this celebration before, do consider coming along. At this Mass, after the

Liturgy of the Word, the three oils are brought forward to Bishop Declan who will bless the Oil of the Sick, which is pure olive oil, used for the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, and the Oil of Catechumens, also pure olive oil which will be used pre-baptism for both adults and children. The Oil of Chrism, pure olive oil mixed with oil from the balsam plant is then consecrated. The Oil of Chrism is used when young people are confirmed, and at the Easter Vigil when adults are confirmed after baptism.

Chrism oil is also part of the baptismal rite. Following an infant's baptism with water and before he receives the white garment, the cross with chrism oil is traced on the crown of the child's head, marking him as a Christian. Anointing on the head is also administered at the baptism of an adult if the person does not immediately receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Holy Chrism oil is used as well during the ordination of a priest (the Sacrament of Holy Orders) and the consecration of a bishop. It is the anointing used in the consecration of a church and the blessing of an altar and the vessels used at Mass.

Parish Liturgies of Reconciliation

Many parishes will have a Liturgy of Reconciliation during Lent, especially in these last two weeks, with the opportunity for individual confession. These can be a rich and rewarding experiences when we are helped to remember that we are not alone in our need to say sorry or find healing. We know that when we sin not only our relationship with God is damaged but it hurts others and the community. Preparing for the sacrament in the company of others, by reflecting on readings, singing appropriate music and joining in prayer, strengthens us in our desire to meet God in our sorrow and vulnerability. The joy of unburdening ourselves allows us to continue on our journey to Easter so that when it comes we are ready and able to rejoice with Christ on Easter Sunday. You will find a couple of different examples of parish Reconciliation Services on the Liturgy Office website [here](#) and [here](#). If you have not been to the Sacrament of Reconciliation for some time and have, perhaps, forgotten how to approach it or what to say, don't worry – just explain this to the priest who will guide you through it. You will find a trifold explaining the Rite and what to say [here](#)

Sacred Paschal Triduum

The Catechism of the Catholic Church instructs us: "Beginning with the Easter Triduum as its source of light, the new age of the Resurrection fills the whole liturgical year with its brilliance. Gradually, on either side of this source, the year is transfigured by the liturgy. It really is a "year of the Lord's favour." The economy of salvation is at work within the framework of time, but since its fulfilment in the Passover of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the culmination of history is anticipated "as a foretaste," and the kingdom of God enters into our time. Therefore Easter is not simply one feast among others, but the "Feast of feasts," the "Solemnity of solemnities," just as the Eucharist is the "Sacrament of sacraments" (the Great Sacrament). St. Athanasius calls Easter "the Great Sunday" and the Eastern Churches call Holy Week "the Great Week." The mystery of the Resurrection, in which Christ crushed death, permeates with its powerful energy our old time, until all is subjected to him." (CCC #1168, 1169)

At the very heart of the Church's year is the great Three days of the Sacred Triduum - Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Resurrection of the Lord. Good liturgy is not simply a reenactment of something that happened over 2000 years ago but a real participation in the events themselves through living faith. The 40-day season of Lent with its practices of prayer, fasting and

almsgiving should find us ready on Holy Thursday to enter into this short three-day season.

Lent itself quietly concludes on Holy Thursday, before we begin the evening Liturgy of the Lord's Supper. This, together with the Friday Passion of the Lord (Good Friday) and the Easter Vigil during the night of Holy Saturday/Sunday, forms just one Liturgy – you will notice that there is no dismissal at the end of the Maundy Thursday Mass or the Good Friday Passion. By having only one name for all three days, the church focuses on something important - the fact that only one mystery is being celebrated: the Paschal Mystery. The three days are not separate liturgies. Rather it is one celebration extending over three days.

As we move into the Triduum, the passion is never separated from the full image of the death/resurrection event. It is always the glorious cross, the triumphant cross, the dying and the conquering death that we now know. This does not mean we neglect the suffering of Jesus or of the whole world. We simply embrace its mystery as best we can.

The Masses of Sunday morning begin the 50 days of rejoicing called Eastertime.

These seasons (Lent, the Triduum, and Eastertime) are about initiation and the sacraments involved (baptism, confirmation, Eucharist). Baptism is once-for-all in our Church. We do not prepare for re-baptism. Once we have entered those waters, whether as a child or adult, we never fully emerge from them. All of life is fulfilling those promises. Lent, Triduum, Eastertime only take us deeper into those waters.

Update on New Translation of the Lectionary

The New Translation of the Lectionary will, finally, be introduced this year, on the First Sunday of Advent, 1 December 2024.

The New Translation will consist of four volumes, not three, namely

- Sundays, Solemnities, Feasts of the Lord
- Weekdays I: Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, OT 1-9; Proper of Saints & Commons
- Weekdays II: OT 6-34; Proper of Saints & Commons
- Ritual Masses, VNO, Votive, Masses for the Dead

The scripture used will be English Standard Version - Catholic Edition and the Abbey Psalms and Canticles.

More news as we receive it.

...and finally - Art & Architecture

Please remember that the Liturgy Office is responsible for advising the bishop and our parishes on matters of liturgical Art and Architecture – building, re-ordering, alterations and additions and artistic commissions - for the churches of the diocese. The Department seeks to serve and help parishes and other communities to explore how they can make better use of their church buildings and chapels for the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy.

Any proposed changes which affect the liturgical and devotional life of the parish or community will need to be referred to the Liturgy Office for advice and permission where necessary. This may

also require diocesan approval and possibly approval from the Historic Churches Committee (in the case of a listed building). For further information please see the Liturgical Diary, pages 157-158, or contact us at the Liturgy Office by email to liturgy@cliftondiocese.com or by telephoning 0117 902 5595.

With best wishes for a very blessed and joyful Easter Season