

# Word on Worship

Newsletter of the Worship Office, Archdiocese of Newark, NJ

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All three days of the Easter triduum celebrate the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord. These days are not historical re-enactments of these events in the life of Jesus. The three days are a unit, one celebration of the paschal mystery by which we are brought to new life. This article highlights the three principal liturgies of the Triduum, namely, the Mass of the Lord's Supper, the Celebration of the Lord's Passion, and the Easter Vigil. It provides those responsible with preparing these liturgies with helpful material, reminders, and suggestions. The article draws upon pastoral experience as well as material found in the Sacramentary, the *Ceremonial of Bishops*, the *Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts* issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship in 1988, the *Rite of Baptism of Children*, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, and other sources.

### Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper

- According to the Sacramentary, there should only be one celebration of the liturgy on this day,

lessen attendance at the main celebration. According to the Sacramentary, if another Mass is celebrated on Holy Thursday, this may only take place with the permission of the local Ordinary. The three days of the Easter Triduum are unique in the Church's calendar, and this uniqueness should be reflected in the liturgical schedule of the parish.

- According to the Sacramentary the tabernacle is to be completely empty before the celebration of the Mass of the Lord's Supper. "Hosts for the communion of the faithful should be consecrated during that celebration. A sufficient amount of bread should be consecrated to provide also for communion on the following day." (*Circular Letter*, #48) During the days before the Triduum, priests and others who prepare the bread and wine for Mass should see that only the elements necessary for the communion of the faithful are consecrated. Only a few hosts need remain to provide for the possible need of the sick or dying on Wednesday or Thursday of Holy Week. This, should, in fact be the practice throughout the year. The eucharist is reserved in the tabernacle for the communion of the sick and the dying, and for adoration, not to provide for the distribution of communion at Mass.
- A fine way to begin the celebration of the Triduum is to make use of the entrance antiphon of the Mass of the Lord's Supper. This antiphon sums up what we are about to celebrate: "We should glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, for he is our salvation, our life, and our resurrection; through him we are saved and made free." (Gal 6:14) If not used during the entrance procession, this antiphon could be sung by the cantor or proclaimed by a minister as an introduction before the procession enters the church.

## PREPARING "THE THREE" OF THE TRIDUUM

namely, the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper. The practice of celebrating Masses earlier in the day confuses the start of the Triduum. Such Masses imply the Triduum has already begun, yet it is "with the celebration of Mass on the evening of Holy Thursday (emphasis added) the Church begins the Easter Triduum." (*Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts*, #44) Such morning Masses also

- According to the Sacramentary the bells of the church are rung during the singing of the Gloria and then remain silent until the Easter Vigil. The bells referred to are the bells of the church which call people to worship and prayer. "During the same period, the organ and other musical instruments may be used only to sustain the singing." (*Ceremonial of Bishops*, #300) The singing of the assembly could also be done without any musical accompaniment. Such singing could even more powerfully highlight the different character of these liturgies.
- The washing of the feet which follows the homily need not include twelve people. The Sacramentary gives no specific number. It would be better not to use twelve people. The washing of the feet is not a dramatization of the

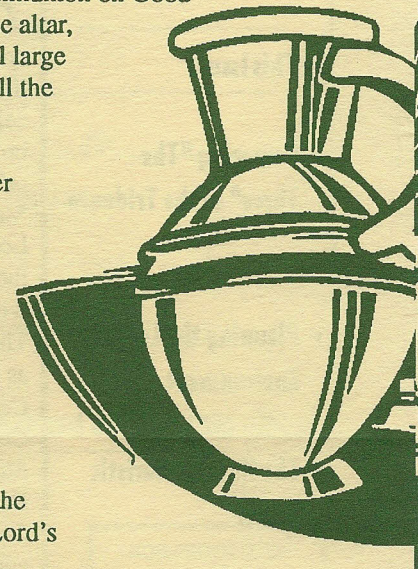
action of the Last Supper, but rather a homily in action. The washing of feet makes clear the Lord's command that we are to be of service to one another. Perhaps the presider could wash the feet of a representative group of parishioners; old and young, men, women, and children. The presider should wash both feet of the selected individuals. He should use soap and water. The washing should be genuine.

- A good musical piece should be chosen which can involve the assembly during the washing of feet. This selection should not require the assembly's use of a worship aid. The people should be free to witness the action as they sing.
- Holy Thursday is a good occasion to recall that the eucharist we celebrate is a call to service as is the washing of the feet. As the Lord gives his body and blood for us, we are to give our lives in service to him and to one another.
- The elect and catechumens are dismissed following the washing of feet.
- The general intercessions follow the washing of feet and dismissal of catechumens. It would be appropriate to sing the intercessions on this solemn occasion.
- A collection may be taken during this liturgy. According to the Sacramentary this collection should be used for the poor. "Gifts for the poor, especially those collected during Lent as the fruit of penance, may be presented in the offertory (sic) procession while the people sing, "*Ubi caritas.*" (Circular Letter, #52) By presenting gifts for the poor the faithful respond to the Lord's command to be of service to those in need.
- This is a day to use the most beautiful vessels available for the bread and wine.
- The holy oils blessed by the bishop at the Chrism Mass may be received in the parish "at the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday or on another suitable day after the celebration of the Chrism Mass." (Sacramentary Supplement) Members of the assembly carry the oils during the procession with the gifts, before the bread and wine. These oils should be in suitable vessels which highlight the dignity and importance of the holy oils. The oils are received by the presider and then placed on a table in the sanctuary or in the repository where they will be reserved. As each oil is presented the significance of the oil may be explained. See the text in the Sacramentary Supplement.

- It is most appropriate that communion be

distributed under both forms at this Mass. Communion should ordinarily be distributed under both forms at all Masses.

- After the distribution of communion, ministers may leave the assembly to bring communion to the sick. "It is more appropriate that the eucharist be borne directly from the altar by the deacons or acolytes, or extraordinary ministers, at the moment of communion... so that, in this way, they (the sick) may be more closely united to the celebrating Church." (Circular Letter, #53)
- After the distribution of communion the remaining consecrated wine is consumed; the remaining hosts as well as those consecrated for the reception of communion on Good Friday are left on the altar, ideally in one vessel large enough to contain all the consecrated breads.
- Following the prayer after communion, the consecrated hosts are solemnly carried to the place of reposition where they remain until they are brought to the altar on Good Friday during the communion rite of the Celebration of the Lord's Passion.
- During the procession with the blessed sacrament the ministers of the Mass, as well as others, could be invited to join the procession. Those in the procession carry lighted candles. (Ceremonial of Bishops, #307)
- The place of reposition is the usual chapel of reservation. If a church does not have such a separate chapel, one should be prepared for the occasion. "The place of reposition on Holy Thursday evening is a 'chapel.' It is either the chapel of reservation, if the church has one, or a chapel set up apart from the church." (Newsletter of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, March, 1993) This chapel is for the "custody of the eucharistic bread that will be distributed in communion on Good Friday." (Circular Letter, #55)
- The chapel of reservation should "be prepared and adorned in such a way as to be conducive to prayer and meditation; that sobriety appropriate to the liturgy of these days is enjoined..." (Circular Letter, #49)



- After the placement of eucharist in the chapel of reservation the liturgy ends without any formal dismissal.
- “After Mass, the altar should be stripped. It is fitting that any crosses in the church be covered...Lamps should not be lit before images of saints.” (*Circular Letter*, #57)
- Solemn adoration before the tabernacle containing the blessed sacrament continues until midnight. A monstrance is NOT to be used, nor is the consecrated wine to be reserved. “The blessed sacrament should be reserved in a closed tabernacle or pyx. Under no circumstances may it be exposed in a monstrance.” (*Circular Letter*, #55)

- The blessed sacrament remains in the place of reposition until the liturgy of the following day. “From midnight onward, however, adoration should be made without external solemnity, for the day of the Lord’s passion has begun.” (*Circular Letter*, #56) After midnight the decorations and candles should be removed from the place of reposition. There remains only the single lighted candle before the tabernacle.

### Good Friday Celebration of the Lord’s Passion

- The appearance of the church should speak of this day. All decorations, statues, and unnecessary furniture should be removed. All crosses that cannot be taken out of the church should be covered. The vestibule area and the place for the assembly should also reflect the starkness of the worship space. “The altar should be completely bare, without cloths, candles, or cross.” (*Sacramentary*, Good Friday, #2)
- “The celebration of the sacraments on this day is strictly prohibited, except for the sacraments of penance and anointing of the sick.” (*Circular Letter*, #61) Funerals are celebrated according to the rite found in Part I, #4 of the *Order of Christian Funerals*, “Funeral Liturgy Outside of Mass.” At such funerals during the Triduum, the organ and other instruments may be played only to sustain the singing. (*Ceremonial of Bishops*, #41)

- “The order for the celebration of the Lord’s passion (the liturgy of the word, the adoration of the cross, and holy communion) that stems from an ancient tradition of the Church should be observed faithfully and religiously and may not be changed by anyone on his own initiative.” (*Circular Letter*, #64)
- The Celebration of the Lord’s Passion takes place in the afternoon, about three o’clock unless pastoral reasons suggest a later hour.” (*Sacramentary*, Good Friday, #3)
- The priest or bishop presides at the Celebration of the Lord’s Passion. Red Mass vestments are worn. This liturgy is not concelebrated.
- The priest and deacons enter in silence. (*Ceremonial of Bishops*, #316)
- During this liturgy “the organ and other musical instruments may only be used to sustain the singing.” (*Ceremonial of Bishops*, #300)
- Though the people may take part in reading the passion narrative, it is probably more effective to use the best readers of the parish and let the people listen.
- The homily should not be omitted. (*Circular Letter*, #66) By its very nature this liturgy is longer, and those who come are aware of the fact. To rush the liturgies of the Triduum or to remove elements of those liturgies in order to shorten them is not only forbidden, but also shows a lack of understanding of these central liturgies of the Church.
- The catechumens and elect are dismissed after the homily before the general intercessions.
- The assembly may remain standing or kneeling throughout the general intercessions. The people may sing an acclamation before the prayer of the priest. This would add to their participation.
- Only one cross should be used for the veneration; multiplying crosses weakens the symbol. A cross should be used rather than a crucifix for this liturgy since we sing, “Behold the wood of the cross on which hung the Savior of the world.” The tense is past. “Let a cross be used that is of appropriate size and beauty...” (*Circular Letter*, #68)
- The cross may be carried into the church, as is done with the paschal candle at the Easter Vigil, or the cross may be unveiled in stages. The unveiling is done with the cross remaining in a fixed position. In both cases, the cross is accompanied by ministers with lighted candles. (*Ceremonial of Bishops*, #321)

- “The cross is to be presented to each of the faithful individually for their adoration, since the personal adoration of the cross is a most important feature in this celebration. Only when necessitated by the large numbers of faithful present should the rite of veneration be made simultaneously by all present.” (*Circular Letter, #69*) A full church should not necessitate such simultaneous veneration. Time should be taken with this important part of the ritual. Multiple crosses should not be used.
- If a large cross is used for the veneration more than one line of people could approach the cross at the same time.
- During the veneration of the cross the assembly should be engaged in appropriate song. The song should not require the people to use a worship aid, in this way the people may continue to sing as they come forward to venerate the cross.
- After the veneration the cross is placed in the sanctuary. The cross is honored by two lighted candles. (*Ceremonial of Bishops, #315, 324*)
- The invitation to, as well as the Lord’s Prayer itself are sung. (*Circular Letter, #70*)
- There is no sign of peace.
- After the distribution of communion, any remaining hosts are taken to a place outside of the church. (*Circular Letter, #70*)
- There is no dismissal to this liturgy.
- After the celebration the altar is stripped and the cross is moved to a place for veneration and meditation. It might be positioned in the now empty chapel of reservation. There should be four lit candles near it. (*Circular Letter, #71*)
- It should be noted that dramatic presentations of the passion or living Stations of the Cross are not part of the liturgy of Good Friday, nor are they legitimate substitutes for, or additions to, the Church’s liturgy.

### Holy Saturday The Easter Vigil

- The Easter Vigil, since it is the night watch of the celebration of the Lord’s resurrection, should be held after sunset. The Sacramentary makes it clear that “The entire celebration of the Easter Vigil takes place at night. It should not begin before nightfall; it should end before daybreak on Sunday.” “This rule is to be taken according to

its strictest sense. Reprehensible are those abuses and practices that have crept into many places in violation of this ruling, whereby the Easter Vigil is celebrated at the time of day that is customary to celebrate anticipated Sunday Masses.”

(*Circular Letter, #78*) To light a fire and candles and speak of this “holy night,” while sunlight streams through the church windows makes no sense. The Circular Letter observes that the objections raised to holding the Vigil at night are not raised when it comes to nighttime Masses at Christmas or other gatherings of various kinds. “The Easter Vigil liturgy should be celebrated in such a way as to offer to the Christian people the riches of the prayers and rites. It is, therefore, important that authenticity be respected...” (*Circular Letter, #93*)

- “...it is never permitted to celebrate the entire Easter Vigil more than once in a given church.” (Sacramentary, The Easter Vigil, #3)
- “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.” (*Circular Letter, #94*)
- The liturgy envisions the new fire prepared outside the church and already burning as people arrive. The fire should be large enough to “genuinely dispel the darkness and light up the night.” (*Circular Letter, #82* and Sacramentary, The Easter Vigil, #7)
- The people are to gather outside the church near the new fire. They should receive candles upon arriving.
- If the fire cannot be prepared outside the church, the priest and ministers go to the door of the church where a suitable fire has been prepared and all continues as usual. (Sacramentary, The Easter Vigil, #13) Every effort should be made to follow the preferred pattern set forth in the instructions. Doing so will take extra effort, but it will make the liturgy even more wonderful!
- The paschal candle is to be made of wax. This candle is not to be made of plastic, with oil or wax inserts. The candle is to be renewed each year, and must be of sufficient size to carry its



important symbolism in the liturgy of the Easter Vigil and to be of use throughout the coming year. (*Circular Letter*, #82)

- The ministers go to the place where the fire has been burning and the people have assembled. The presider makes the sign of the cross and greets the people in the usual way. (*Ceremonial of Bishops*, #338, 339)

- After the blessing of the fire, the presider may emphasize the symbols on the paschal candle, or he may simply light the candle with a flame from the new fire. (Sacramentary, *The Easter Vigil*, #10-12)

- After the paschal candle has been lighted, it leads the procession of the people into the church.

Remember to provide a wind guard for the candle. (A hurricane lamp glass can be used for this purpose.)

- The order of procession into the church is as follows: censerbearer, deacon with paschal candle, presider, concelebrants, other ministers, the rest of

the assembly. (*Ceremonial of Bishops*, #343)

- The acclamation, "Thanks be to God," sung by people, after the deacon proclaims, "Christ our light," may be expanded to make it richer and musically fuller. (*Circular Letter*, #83)
- The candles of the people are lighted after the second "Christ our light," which is sung when the procession reaches the church doors. (Sacramentary, *The Easter Vigil*, #15)
- The Easter Proclamation may be sung by a deacon, priest, cantor, or another minister. The most important criteria is the ability to sing well with faith, love, devotion, and understanding. Acclamations for the people may be inserted into the Easter Proclamation. (*Circular Letter*, #84)
- The Easter Proclamation is sung at the pulpit. (Sacramentary, *The Easter Vigil*, #17)
- While the Sacramentary says that the lights in the church are turned on after the deacon sings Christ our light for the third time, it may be better to turn only some of the lights so that the burning

candles of the assembly may be better seen during the singing of the Easter Proclamation. The pastoral notes of the Revised Sacramentary suggest the electric lighting may be left off until the service of light is concluded.

- The nine readings which comprise the liturgy of the word for this night are, in the words of the Sacramentary, "the fundamental element of the Easter Vigil." With this in mind, it is clear that every effort should be made to proclaim all the readings.

- The Gloria is sung following the last reading from the Old Testament with its response and prayer. The bells of the church, which have remained silent since the Gloria of Holy Thursday, are now rung. The altar candles are also lighted at this time. (Sacramentary, *The Easter Vigil*, #31)

- This liturgy demands a beautiful gospel proclamation, and a prolonged singing of the Alleluia. Candles are not carried in this night's gospel procession. (Sacramentary, *The Easter Vigil*, #35)

- Adult baptisms should be part of the Easter Vigil since this liturgy leads to the celebration of the sacraments of initiation.

- Those to be baptized are led to the font by a minister carrying the paschal candle. The minister with the candle goes first in this procession, followed by the elect with their godparents, and then the presider and other ministers. The people enter after these ministers. The litany of the saints should accompany this procession. (Sacramentary, *The Easter Vigil*, #39)

- Every effort should be made to baptize by immersion, or at least by partial immersion. "Baptism by immersion is the fuller and more expressive sign of the sacrament and, therefore, is preferred. Although it is not yet a common practice in the United States, provision should be made for its more frequent use in the baptism of adults. At the least, the provision of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* for partial immersion, namely, immersion of the candidate's head, should be taken into account." (*National Statutes for the Catechumenate*, #17)

- Appropriate garments of sufficient size should be prepared for presentation to the adults to be baptized. The candles presented to the newly baptized should be large and beautiful.

- The pastoral notes of the Revised Sacramentary state "In a parish, therefore, it ought to be quite

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##### Contributors:

Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski

Carol Willis

& the staff of the Worship Office

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exceptional to celebrate the Vigil without baptism, at least the baptism of infants in those circumstances where there are no adult candidates.”

- If infants are being baptized during the Vigil, they could be brought into the Church following the liturgy of the word. While adults can appreciate the number and purpose of the readings, infants will not.
- If infants are baptized, the presentation of a lighted candle is omitted at the Easter Vigil, as is the ephphetha prayer. (*Rite of Baptism of Children*, #28)
- Confirmation follows the sacrament of baptism. If there are candidates for full communion with the Catholic Church, then confirmation follows the renewal of baptismal promises by the assembly.
- “It is preferable that the reception into full communion not take place at the Easter Vigil lest there be confusion of such baptized Christians with the candidates for baptism, possible misunderstanding of or even reflection upon the sacrament of baptism celebrated in another Church or ecclesial community, or any perceived triumphalism in the liturgical welcome into the Catholic eucharistic community.” (*National Statutes for the Catechumenate*, #33) “The reception of candidates into full communion should ordinarily take place at the Sunday Eucharist of the parish community.” (*National Statutes for the Catechumenate*, #32)
- The candles of the assembly are lighted for the renewal of baptismal promises. (*Sacramentary, The Easter Vigil*, #46) The candles should be lighted with a flame from the paschal candle or from the candles of newly baptized. After their responses, the people are sprinkled with the newly blessed water. This sprinkling should be full and abundant.
- The liturgy of the eucharist, which follows the service of light, the liturgy of the word, and the sacraments of initiation, should be celebrated with reverence and care. This is not the time to rush in order to shorten the length of the liturgy, or to make up time. Everything we have done leads to the liturgy of the eucharist, where those present come to the table of the Lord to share his life-giving body and blood. (*Circular Letter*, #91)
- “The Vigil culminates with the liturgy of the eucharist.... It is the high point of the night’s liturgy because it is in the fullest sense the Easter

sacrament.” (*Proposed Revision of the Sacramentary, Pastoral Notes*)

- If baptisms have taken place, there are special interpolations for Eucharistic Prayers I, II, and III. See the Ritual Mass for Baptism in the Sacramentary. (*Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, #242)
- Communion should be given under both forms. (*Circular Letter*, #92)
- The deacon, or in his absence, the presider, adds a sung double Alleluia to the concluding proclamation. The people repeat this double Alleluia after their response. (*Sacramentary, The Easter Vigil*, page 207)
- As the assembly is leaving the church, the greeters or other ministers might present the people with a spring flower, or a decorated egg, as they wish them the joy of Easter. The newly blessed Easter water should be available for the people to take to their homes. It would also be fitting to have a reception following the liturgy to share the foods of the Easter season and to offer the community an opportunity to personally welcome its new members.✚



Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski  
Director—Worship Office

Further Reading:

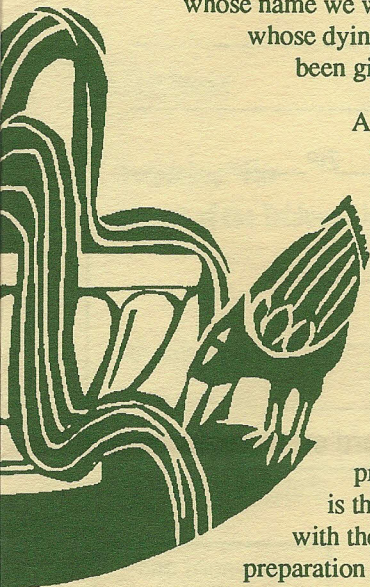
*Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts*, issued January 16, 1988 by the Congregation for Divine Worship. Available from the Office of Publishing and Promotion Services, USCC, Washington, D.C., Publication #219-5.

*The Three Days*, revised edition, by Gabe Huck. Available from Liturgy Training Publications, 1800 North Hermitage Ave, Chicago, IL.

We Need to Understand That “the Triduum Is a Single Celebration of the Paschal Mystery” by James Notebaart, *Pastoral Music*, April-May 1995.

The closing statement of *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship* poses a powerful question: "...can the environment be anything less than a vehicle to meet the Lord and to encounter one another?" It is a question worth addressing each time we begin to plan a particular season. In this case the season is Lent.

Planning the lenten worship environment challenges us to dig deeply, to unearth the mystery of the season as it is revealed in its rich scriptures and prayers. The experience we call Lent is one that is devoid of the usual signs of beauty that may distract our attention. Now we must confront the God within and, in so doing, seek to become more like that God in whose image we were made, in whose name we were baptized, and in whose dying and rising we have been given life eternal.



A stark environment deprives the senses of beauty and satisfaction.

Lent is a time of barrenness and simplicity. During Lent we hunger and thirst. Lent emphasizes our thirst for the life-giving water that only God can provide. Remember, Lent is the assembly's journey with the elect in their final preparation for the waters of baptism, as well as a time for us to reconcile our broken baptismal covenants.

How can the parish focus its attention on this awesome season? How will the environment help to create the atmosphere, the mood of Lent? The following suggestions are made with three considerations in mind:

Lent-Triduum-Easter is a whole unit within the cycle of sacred time we call the liturgical year.

Initiation is at the heart of this cycle: preparing for it during Lent, baptizing at the Vigil, and celebrating the sacraments of initiation during the Easter season.

The worship space is the whole area of the church—the entrance, the gathering space (no matter its size), the place for the assembly, as well as the area around the altar.

### Some Do's

- Keep the environment simple, perhaps even austere.

- Plan for all three stages of the cycle. If done well, continuity in design will be the outcome. Try to be consistent year to year in what is used and where it is placed. As there are certain "sounds" for particular seasons, so too is there a "look" that people will come to expect. This means serious discussion and sketching of ideas before implementing them. Each addition or subtraction must ring consonant with what the Church is proclaiming at this time. Barren branches in a vase during Lent can become bouquets of spring flowers at Easter.

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## PLANNING THE LENTEN ENVIRONMENT

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- Provide a visible place for the Book of the Elect with the names of those to be fully initiated at this Easter Vigil. Two possible places are in the vestibule or near the font. The book, along with pictures of those to be received into full communion, baptized, confirmed, or to receive first eucharist, reminds us to support in prayer those to be initiated.
- Discuss what the parish is doing about prayer, fasting, and almsgiving during this season. A simple and attractive box or basket can be a reminder of the Lenten call to charity.
- Keep the area around the altar, ambo, font, and chair uncluttered.
- Include the space used for other functions in your plans, especially that used for the catechumens and that used for the liturgy of the word with children.
- Be sure that the Lenten purple is used as opposed to Advent purple.
- Evaluate at the end of the season.

### Some Don'ts

- Don't use flowers, either in the sanctuary or in devotional areas. The austerity of Lent will be transformed into Easter glory.
- Don't limit the focus of Lent on the cross. The twofold theme of Lent is repentance and baptism. Emphasis on the passion begins with the Fifth week of Lent.
- Don't fill the holy water stoops with stones, ashes, or sand. Don't empty them of water until the start of the Triduum.
- Don't try to capture the "theme" of each Sunday's readings with a symbol. Rather, let the richness and power of the word of God unfold in those

who hear it. One symbol for each Sunday minimizes the full meaning of the season and is difficult to reproduce each year when the reading cycles change.

- Don't cover crosses and images. (The National Conference of Catholic Bishops has never voted to continue the practice of covering crosses and images and so the practice, in accord with the rubric of the Sacramentary, has not been permissible for the past twenty-five years. Individual parishes are not free to reinstate the practice on their own.) The only exception is during the Triduum when only crosses are covered, not other images.

The time spent planning the Lenten environment will be well worth the effort. The final statement of *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship* is a fitting close to this discussion: "The challenge of our environment is the final challenge of Christ. We must make ready until he returns in glory."+

Carol Willis  
Liturgical Consultant  
Pastoral Associate  
Holy Trinity, Westfield, NJ

### ORDER YOUR COPY OF THE NEW EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

"The new eucharistic prayer, based on a revised Latin version of the Swiss Synod eucharistic prayer, was approved by members of the NCCB in 1994 for use in the United States. Confirmation was given by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments on May 9, 1995." (Bishops Committee on the Liturgy Newsletter. November, 1995)

The Catholic Book Publishing Company edition of this new eucharistic prayer is on sale from the Worship Office. Every parish and institution should order at least one copy of this official addition to the Sacramentary. Anticipated shipping is during the end of February.

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