

An Introduction to the Celebration of the Easter Triduum



THE HARBOUR PARISHES
Monkstown – Passage West – Ringaskiddy - Shanbally

HOLY THURSDAY - MAUDY THURSDAY

This is the proof of the authenticity of my love for Christ. If I am united with Christ, I am together with my neighbour, and this unity is not limited to the moment of communion, but only begins here. It becomes life, becomes flesh and blood, in the everyday experience of sharing life with my neighbour.

[Pope Benedict, Eucharistic Congress 2002]

MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Liturgy of the Word

The First Reading tells the story of the first Passover in Egypt when God delivers the people of Israel from slavery.

St. Paul writes about Christ's gift of the Eucharist at the Last Supper.

In the Gospel St John describes the symbolic action of Jesus washing the disciples' feet.

The Washing of Feet

During or just after the gospel, the presider re-enacts the symbolic action of Jesus by washing the feet of several people from the congregation.

The Eucharist

The Eucharist and the washing of the feet are part of the same action of Jesus—a pouring out of himself for others in love. The word 'Maundy Thursday' comes from the Latin word 'mandatum' - the instruction of Jesus. For both actions, the Eucharist and the Washing of Feet, he says 'Do this in memory of me.' This sets the scene for all the events that we will celebrate in the coming days.

*May you embrace the beauty in what you do
and how you stand like a secret angel
between the bleak despair of suffering
and the unquenchable light of spirit
that can turn the darkest destiny towards dawn.*

Taken from "For a Nurse" © John O' Donoghue, *Benedictus: A Book of Blessings* (London: Bantam Press, 2007)

Watch and Pray

The Blessed Sacrament is taken to the altar of repose. There is a period of prayer and adoration. After the presider leaves the altar is stripped, crosses are removed or covered.

The Blessed Sacrament may remain for private prayer until midnight. Some parishes celebrate a holy hour late in the evening with prayer, readings, music and the night prayer of the Church.

GOOD FRIDAY

There is a call here not to hide our face from evil, not to walk around it, or pretend it is not there; but to face its massiveness in spite of our feelings of powerlessness and insignificance and to become involved in transforming it.

(Elizabeth Johnson)

What does the death of Jesus mean? How are we to understand it?

Different ways in which the Christian tradition has interpreted the death of Christ include:

- As a SACRIFICE for our sins in order to restore a right relationship to God.
- As a SUBSTITUTION: Christ takes our place in accepting the punishment merited by sin.
- REDEMPTION: To redeem a slave meant paying the price for their freedom. On the cross Christ pays the price so that humankind is freed from slavery to sin.
- SATISFACTION: God has been dishonoured by sin and so a price must be paid to restore God's blemished honour.

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The theologian Carlos Bravo raises several important questions about these traditional understandings.

1. Do we believe in a God who demands satisfaction to restore relationship with humankind? Is such an image consistent with the God proclaimed by Jesus in the gospels?
2. These traditional approaches seem to interpret the basic human reality as sinful.
3. They appear to turn salvation into a drama that happens between God and Jesus, in which humanity has no part.
4. If we reduce the saving dimension of Christ's life merely to the cross, we run the danger of canonizing suffering, inducing passivity and hiding the saving dimension of Christ's life and work.
5. If Christ's death achieves in and of itself a restored relationship between God and humankind then the resurrection is superfluous or is something that happens simply between God and Jesus and does not involve us in any way.

Bravo favours a different understanding. He insists that Christ's death on the cross can only be understood in the context of the whole of his ministry, his proclamation and his life practice. His life involved a double solidarity: to God and to humankind.

The cross is the price he pays for being faithful to his own sense of himself and his mission. His mission is not to come to earth to die but rather death is the price he ultimately pays for being true to who he is.

The restoration brought about by his perfect fidelity is the restoration of God's project, of God's plan for humankind. Jesus lives, dies and is raised as Son so that those of us who believe in him can also live as God's children and as brothers and sisters to each other. We are saved not because Christ has wiped the slate clean but because his whole life, death and resurrection, give us a new capacity, a new Spirit, to live as children of God.

THE CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S PASSION

Setting the Scene

- * A bare church, no flowers.
- * Ceremony begins in Silence:

The Liturgy of the Word

- * The readings from Isaiah, Psalm 30 and the Letter to the Hebrews.
It is not as if we had a high priest who was incapable of feeling our weakness with us...
- * The Gospel Reading is the Passion from St John's Gospel.
- * The General Intercessions presents the needs of the Church and world to God through Christ who *will not refuse anything he can give.*

The Veneration of the Cross

Behold the Wood of the Cross...

John's Passion invites us to venerate the cross as a symbol of Christ's free gift to us of new life. We can bring to this moment all our pain and suffering and that of the world in the knowledge that Christ is the light that darkness cannot overpower.

One cross is held by people, in accompaniment, as people process and venerate it however they choose. We have been united to the cross of Jesus in our baptism –here we embrace that again, in the hope of resurrection.

Holy Communion

Ancient tradition omitted this element. Its presence can be seen as an echo of the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday.

We depart in silence: *'and all went sorrowfully away.'*

THE EASTER VIGIL

Every body, every where and every when bear the features of beauty and destruction: their double capacity to render us vulnerable to the holy. The holy, the Holy One, the Holy Spirit, the God of creation, redemption and resurrection is all present, all piercing, all healing. Openness to that presence is gift and call, at once costing and fulfilling not less than everything. (Enda McDonagh)

Service of Light

- * All gather around a large fire outside the church during the night. The paschal candle is lit, and leads the people into the
- * darkened church All light their candles and the Exsultet is sung in praise of the Risen Christ, the light of the world.

Liturgy of the Word

- * A series of readings and psalms remember the faithfulness of God, from the very beginning of creation through the exodus to God's promise of a new covenant which he proclaimed through the prophets.
- * The Gloria is sung and the bells rung to give glory to the Risen Lord.
- * A reading from St Paul about Baptism reminds us that in baptism we are baptised into Christ's death and resurrection and so share in the new life that God promises to his people in Christ.
- * The Gospel of the Resurrection.

Liturgy of Baptism

In the early Church the Easter vigil was the only time each year when baptism was celebrated.

The litany of saints is sung during the procession to the font, a reminder that we are not alone but are part of the great family of believers throughout the ages.

The Blessing of the Easter Water which will be used to baptise children in the parish over the coming months.

We ask you Father, with your Son to send the Holy Spirit upon the waters of this font. May all who are buried with Christ, in the death of Baptism rise also with him to newness of life.

The candidates for Baptism and Confirmation receive the sacraments.

- * *Rejoice you newly baptised: chosen members of the Kingdom!*
- * *Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

Renewal of Baptismal Promises: We stand as one community of faith with candles lit to renew our faith in the light of the resurrection and the Risen Christ.

Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Those who have been baptised and confirmed now receive Holy Communion for the first time.

The Triduum is completed in Eucharist and in being sent out to 'love and serve the Lord, alleluia.'