

Introduction

I am sure that you all know that liturgy has a twofold dimension where we show through word and action by watching a listening the things that are inexpressible in words alone. But it also serves to put us in touch with the inner reality of that Kingdom of God that is within us as we read in the gospels. So our liturgy's outward expression drives us to a deep inner experience of God's presence within us and among us. So as an introduction to these three wonderful days where the church's liturgy rises to its greatest heights I thought that it would be helpful to remind ourselves of the sacred actions that we will occur. As you know already Lent ends with the beginning of the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday. We then move into a special time that should orientate not only our liturgies but our whole lives during the three days. We are encouraged to make these days as quiet as possible and avoiding as far as possible all unnecessary tasks. The days should be as simple as possible. This is marked by the ambience in the church. Remember as well that the liturgies are all one service so there is no ending of the Holy Thursday or Good Friday liturgies. All in all the whole three days should reflect the entrance antiphon provided in the liturgy for Holy Thursday;

We should glory in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ for he is our salvation, our life and our resurrection, though him we are saved and set free.

Holy (Maundy) Thursday

The church will be stripped bare of everything that is not going to be used for the celebration and we should have quietness in church when we arrive. The Theme of this Mass is one of service: *Disciples of Christ the Servant*. There will be no rush in the celebration and hopefully it will provide a gentle and simple time of prayer. After the entrance procession the Holy Oils blessed by Bishop Declan in the Cathedral will be received into the church. They will serve to anoint those baptised or confirmed and those who are sick. We sing the Gloria tonight during which the bells will ring and then remain silent until they joyfully ring out in the Mass on the Saturday night Easter Vigil. Following the Gospel Father Patrick, Elaine and Carol will affirm their commitment to serve the Catholic Community of St. Michael's Tetbury and then Father Patrick will wash the feet of twelve representatives from the parish

following the injunction of Jesus in the Gospel reading. As usual there will be a collection for the poor. After all have received Holy Communion the consecrated Bread to be used for Communion on Good Friday will be carried through the church and around to the church hall to a place of repose. The congregation will be invited to follow and if possible to watch for one hour before the Blessed Sacrament. **We all leave though in total silence.**

Good Friday

Today our theme is *Triumph through surrender* and this thought runs through the entire celebration. There is no formal beginning to the celebration as it is a continuation from Holy Thursday night. It is very important therefore that we are silent from the time we arrive. The ministers will kneel before the altar in silence at the beginning and Father Patrick will lie prostrate for a while in silent prayer. The silence will be broken and the first part will begin with the Prayer of the Day and then we will sit for two readings from sacred scripture with a sung responsorial psalm. The Passion from John's Gospel will be read by one voice and it will be divided into three parts with a gentle and reflective chant being sung between each part. At a gentle pace we have the six General Intercessions for the whole of creation. The second part begins dramatically with the beautiful wooden cross made lovingly by a parishioner from 500 year old oak will be solemnly brought into the church for all to venerate either by a genuflection, a kiss, a bow, a touch or simply by standing before it in silence for a moment. This should be without any rush and space should be kept as each person makes their own act of veneration. The Final third part will be done very simply as the Blessed Sacrament is brought from the place of repose to the altar for Holy Communion. A prayer over the people will be said and then again there will be no formal ending and people are encouraged to remain in silent prayer in the church for a while. **Leaving of course needs to be done in silence.**

Holy Saturday

And so we gather with the hand candles provided in silence once again outdoors at the front of the hall ready to begin the third part of our Triduum before we move into the first Mass of Easter. We will light our Easter fire and mark and bless our Paschal Candle which will be carried solemnly into church announcing *Christ our Light* and lighting our own little candles. This sets the theme *Kindled in the fire of love*. After the candle has been incensed a cantor will sing the great ancient Easter Proclamation sometimes called the Exsultet. We now extinguish our hand candles and settle down to hear the scriptural accounts of God's action in our world. We hear the story of creation then the account of the great Exodus from the slavery of Egypt. Now we move into the first mass of Easter with the Gloria where the bells will ring once again and the Gospel of the Resurrection will be read with a restoration of the great alleluias. The homily is followed with the baptismal liturgy where we bless the Easter water in the font and we renew our baptismal promises. As a sacramental reminder of our Baptism we will be sprinkled with the newly blessed water. With great joy we celebrate Eucharist and receive Holy Communion. The night ends with an Easter Blessing and we can now rejoice with all our voices as the quietness of the Triduum gives way to the ecstatic joy of Easter.

I hope that these few notes will be helpful to you and that they will be a real encouragement to come and participate in the whole Triduum with us. It really brings the joy of Easter fully alive.

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ST MICHAELS CHURCH

TETBURY

THE PASCHAL TRIDUUM 2010

