

**Principle One:**  
**Liturgy Celebrates the Paschal Mystery**  
**(the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension)**  
**as the Redeeming Work of Jesus Christ the Lord.**<sup>8</sup>

The paschal mystery is at the very heart of Christian faith (relationship with God in Christ) and the liturgical year (our ordered way of living the Christian life). This paschal, Easter mystery recalls the suffering and death and rising of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>9</sup> It is one mystery. It is one redemptive event. We take our name from him, the dead and risen one, who saved us once for all.

Every eighth day, Christians gather as Jesus commanded.<sup>10</sup> On this Lord's Day we break bread and share the cup. At Mass, by the power of Christ and the Church at prayer, bread and wine become the Body given up and the Blood of the new and everlasting covenant.<sup>11</sup> Christ himself becomes the sacred meal eaten in memory of this dead and risen one. We give this mystery special attention in the annual celebration of the Easter Triduum (Three Days) and the Easter season (Fifty Days).

Every liturgy must clearly speak the message of death and resurrection. Every liturgy proclaims that the passage through death is acceptable and necessary because new life is on the other side.

**Good Practices to Foster**

Plants and flowers that die and go into the compost pile speak death and life. Candles that burn down and are periodically replaced speak death and life. Symbols that are large and clear and unencumbered speak death and life. Rituals that help us prepare for death and grieve over death and proclaim our trust in what will come speak death and life.

Saint Agnes Parish<sup>12</sup> saves all the candle stubs throughout the year – not only those from the candles used at Mass, but the sanctuary lamp, the votive candles, the Vigil tapers, and the old Easter candle. On February 2, the feast of the Presentation of the Lord, parishioners bring in household stubs of blessed candles and take home newly blessed ones for use during the next 12 months. From all this wax, a new Easter candle is made and adorned for blessing at the coming Easter Vigil.

Saint Albert Parish commits half of the tillable land on the campus to plants and flowers, trees and shrubs. The Good Ground Committee tends expansive beds with native plantings and seasonal flowers that bloom throughout the growing seasons and stand witness to past blooms in dormant ones. The committee's task is to help bring the outside inside as the seasons change and the liturgical year progresses: Forsythia branches and tulips in early spring, lilies and green plants in later spring, daisies, Queen Anne's Lace, and asters in summer, and mums, grasses, produce, and foliage in fall.

A parishioner of Saint Angela Parish plants and harvests an alfalfa crop on the land set aside for future expansion. The hay is given to farmers who have need of it that year.

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<sup>8</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 5.

<sup>9</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 5; *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar*, no. 18; *The Roman Missal*, Eucharistic Prayer, "Let us proclaim the mystery of faith."

<sup>10</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 106; *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar*, no. 4.

<sup>11</sup> *The Roman Missal*, Eucharistic Prayer.

<sup>12</sup> This and the following stories are true. Parish names have been changed so that every parish can make the story true for itself.

Saint Ambrose Parish has an apple picking party in its small orchard. Half of the crop goes to the local food pantry; the rest is made into juice, jelly, and pies for the parish fall festival.

The Pastoral Care Committee at Saint Ann Parish cares for the sick, homebound, and elderly with pastoral visits, Meals on Wheels, and transportation to doctors. The Bereavement Committee cares not only for the dying but the families left behind. Some members help with funeral arrangements and liturgies. Some bring in food and lay out a meal for all who return from the procession to the cemetery. The anniversaries of 30 days, one year, and family occasions are marked with attention to those who still remain and remember the death.

Saint Anthony Parish, in preparation for its centennial year, gathered information on all the deaths of people buried from the parish church. A calligrapher filled page after page with names and dates. It is updated annually. This beautifully bound book is placed in the church on the solemnity of All Saints. It remains throughout the month of November while the Church reflects on thanks for the harvest, holiness, death, the end time, and the second coming of Christ.

### **Dangers to Avoid**

Plastic plants and silk flowers, no matter how beautiful, do not help us trust the paschal mystery. With only a periodic dusting, they proclaim: you never have to deal with the mess of death.

Tubes with spring-loaded candles or containers with oil-fed wicks, and electric votive lamps tell a lie. What is made to look like a candle never burns down, never leaves a stub, is never consumed.

Baptizing with three teaspoons of water suggests that we are uneasy about being baptized into the death of Christ. Baptizing in three hundred gallons of water proclaims more confidently that we are buried with him in death and then raised to newness of life.<sup>13</sup>

Bread that cannot be seen to be broken by those sitting in the last pew does not speak clearly about the meal to be shared. Too little wine and too few ministers of the cup discourage the faithful from sharing robustly in eating and drinking at the table of the Lord.

### **What Is at Stake**

The paschal mystery – death and rebirth – is cherished by the Church. Every texture, every color, every plant, every item, every gesture and song and spoken word must proclaim that we are not afraid of death. Death has no more power over us; life is for ever changed. And so, every ritual act, every liturgy must exude the paschal mystery of the dead and risen Christ Jesus the Lord.

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<sup>13</sup> *Lectionary for Mass*, no. 41ABC, Epistle for the Easter Vigil, Romans 6:3-11; *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, nos. 213 and 226; *National Statutes for the Catechumenate (USA)*, no. 17.

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- Read the preceding two pages.
- In silence, write down additional (1) good practices to foster and (2) dangers to avoid. Do this either as homework to prepare for the meeting or during some silence provided during the meeting.
- Share this individual work in the large group.

<b>(1) – More Good Practices to Foster</b>

<b>(2) – More Dangers to Avoid</b>

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- In silence, (3) assess the current parish practice concerning this principle for good liturgy.
- Then listen to the assessing of current parish practice each person has done respecting any differences expressed while at the same time testing each assessment with the values and principles of Roman Catholic liturgy. Affirm the good practices of the parish.
- Brainstorm (4) dreams for the parish to improve the celebration of liturgy.

<b>(3) – Assessing Current Parish Practice</b>

<b>(4) – Dreams for Parish Improvement</b>