

A LITURGY FOR ASH WEDNESDAY (THE FIRST DAY OF LENT) LITURGICAL NOTES AND SUGGESTIONS

The Season of Lent

Lent is a time of preparation for Easter: forty days of preparation for fifty days of celebration. Lent means waiting: for the cross, the water and the fire. God does not need Lent, but we do. The rhythm of fast and feast taps into some elemental need of ours, where denial creates longings to be satisfied so that we come to deeper appreciation of God's great gifts.

Lent is a time for preparing catechumens (baptismal candidates) for Easter baptism. It has its origins in the fact that preparation of catechumens is a process by which the whole Christian community is renewed. While Sunday is always a festival of the crucified and raised Christ, omission of the *Gloria (Glory to God)*, along with addition of the *Trisagion (Holy God, holy and mighty ...)* and other Lenten material provided in *A Prayer Book for Australia* will help set the tone for the Season.

The six Sundays of the season are seen as a unity. The usual liturgical colours for the first five Sundays are violet or Lenten array (blood red, black and calico). The only Sunday with any significant difference is Lent VI - the Sunday of the Passion (Palm Sunday) when the colour changes to red (but preferably without the Pentecost symbols), and it can be appropriate for red to remain through to Good Friday.

Setting the scene

Early planning is needed. A distinct break in the setting and mood of the liturgy needs to be made from Christmas and the Sundays after Epiphany to Lent. The intention is to create a more intense focus on the principal symbols of God's presence with us. These are: the assembly of Christ's people; the lectern; the Lord's Table; the empty font. This can happen in different ways: by removing clutter, by covering up decorative art etc., by changes in lighting, by the removal of flowers. Different buildings and different communities will demand different treatment. A good rule of thumb might be to remove everything that is not directly needed. The font can be emptied and covered. Covering crosses in Holy Week is a tradition sometimes observed. However, even if several crosses are visible in a church, Lent is a good time to remove them all and bring back only one (uncovered) for Passion Sunday and Holy Week.

Pancakes and ashes

Shrove Tuesday events go hand in hand with Ash Wednesday: feasting before fasting. One without the other leaves something missing. If it is difficult to have two midweek events, perhaps some of the feasting can be transferred to the Last Sunday after Epiphany, with the traditional pancake party held at breakfast or morning tea. On the same day everyone may be invited to bring last year's palm crosses or fronds to be burnt to make the ashes for Ash Wednesday.

How shall we begin Lent? There is work to do well before Ash Wednesday, and these preparations can involve the whole community. Ash Wednesday is the focus: Shrove Tuesday 'events' need to supplement the more important First Day of Lent.

On the Last Sunday after Epiphany it is possible to do two helpful things: the first in church, the second extending the Lord's table to the breakfast or morning tea table. Everyone may be asked to bring back last year's palm crosses or fronds and to burn them to make the ashes for Ash Wednesday. This represents a little death, a letting go of the past in order to embrace God's future. The burning of the palms is best done in silence.

To Baptise or not to Baptise?

Easter baptism is resuming its central place in the sacramental life of the Church. Baptisms during Lent actually undermine the character of the season.

A LITURGY FOR THE SUNDAY OF THE PASSION (PALM SUNDAY)

LITURGICAL NOTES

Holy Week

Within the framework of the Lenten season, the last week stands out for special attention, not simply because it contains Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, but because the whole week is a commemoration and celebration of our Lord's Passion. This week of the Passion is inaugurated on Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday or 6th Sunday of Lent) with the reading of the Passion Gospel which sets the tone for the rest of the week.

To mark out this week as one of special solemnity, the decoration of the liturgical space might well mark the change by using passion red as the colour. A large cross may be placed centrally, for this is the Week of the Cross. Branches and Palm fronds may be left in the church from the Sunday through to Maundy Thursday, when they should be removed.

In Holy Week we need to be particularly careful not to try and 're-enact' the events of the days before the death of Jesus. Liturgy is about celebration and commemoration rather than re-enactment. The careful and simple use of our symbols can serve this. The cross should be large and preferably wooden; branches, palm fronds or crosses need to be of an adequate size; processions need to go from one place to another.

The Eucharist, the celebration of Christ's saving death, is the primary focus of our liturgies for the week. Many communities will therefore want to celebrate the Eucharist on each day until Thursday. Other devotions, such as Stations of the Cross or Tenebrae should not replace the church's main celebration on these days, but may well be an adjunct to it.

As this is the central week of the Christian Year and central to the life of the Church, it is recommended that wherever possible there be only one celebration of the Liturgies for Passion (Palm) Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday. While it may be ideal to celebrate only one great Liturgy of the Resurrection on Easter Sunday, this is often not practicable.

Passion (Palm) Sunday

In early times there were two liturgical celebrations on this Day: the Eucharist of the Day which commemorated the Passion of our Lord and, later in the day, a procession of all the people carrying palms in procession to the Great Church in Jerusalem for Vespers. As the years passed, these two different commemorations merged into one, and in some places the re-enactment of the 'Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem' took over in importance. Some communities have made this the main theme of the Day's liturgy and omitted the Passion reading altogether. It should be remembered, however, that it is not the entry into Jerusalem, but rather the Passion Reading that sets the major theme for the whole week (as is recognised in the *Book of Common Prayer*).

The Liturgy of the Palms

The Palm Gospel needs to be read in a loud and clear voice, especially if it is read in the open air.

The Distribution of the Palms is best done before the liturgy begins. It is important for a good number of large palm fronds to be carried in the procession. It is appropriate to distribute the crosses for personal use. This may happen at the end of the liturgy.

The Procession is the major part of the Palm Liturgy. The first Palm Pilgrims moved from the Mount of Olives into the Great Church in Jerusalem. Palm processions ought to enter the church building from outside. The gathering of the people may take place in another building, the church driveway, a nearby park or in the street. A procession is a public event, and should take a route that will cause it to be public. Effort should be made to include all the members of the assembly in the procession. This may necessitate helping the elderly or having a number of stations (stops) along the way to help people keep together.

Special consideration needs to be given to music for the Procession. A music group playing wind or brass instruments could be placed in the middle of the group to help keep the singing together. "All glory, laud

and honour” can become tedious if it is sung for too long. Taizé settings of the “Hosanna” can be very effective in procession.

A station (stop) at the church entrance can be a useful way of gathering everyone together again after processing. It also enables a change of hymn to take place as the people enter the building and go to their places. This hymn can be accompanied by the usual musical instrument(s) of the congregation.

The Liturgy of the Palms and the Palm Procession have been used as occasions for ecumenical co-operation. In some places a number of congregations gather for the Palm Liturgy in some common (public) place and then process to their own building for whatever service is to follow. Such a practice has all sorts of imaginative possibilities.

The Ministry of the Word

The Passion Gospel is always read. While the lectionary provides two other readings and a psalm it may be appropriate to have only one other reading and omit the psalm.

There are a number of possibilities when it comes to reading the Passion Gospel, including:

- reading with 3 readers (a narrator, Jesus, and the rest);
- reading with as many readers as there are characters in the story, including the congregation, provided copies are available;
- musical settings to be sung using a few voices or with choir or even with congregation (see resources). However, to bring off such a presentation well requires considerable skills by the singers/musicians—such a method should only be used if the musical resources are up to it;
- antiphonal reading between one voice and the congregation; ♦ one voice reading the whole passage alone.

In order to best convey the story of the Passion, all readers should be competent and well rehearsed. The words of Jesus should not be reserved to clergy or to men only, but may be spoken by any member of the community.

The Passion Gospel is long. Permission should be given for people to sit. Appropriate changes in posture may include standing when Jesus is taken out to be crucified and bowing or kneeling with a short silence when Jesus dies.

It is important that a sermon is preached.

A LITURGY FOR MAUNDY THURSDAY

LITURGICAL NOTES

This liturgy is celebrated once on this day, normally in the evening.

The name ‘Maundy’ derives from the Latin for ‘new commandment’ – *mandatum novum* – which Christ (according to John) gave his disciples at the ‘Last Supper’.

Maundy Thursday marks the beginning of the Great Three Days. This holiest time of the year contains differing emphases, but it is, nevertheless, a continuum.

This is a very rich liturgy. The Gospel speaks of love and service, which are also expressed in the ceremony of the foot washing. The New Testament reading records the institution of the Lord’s Supper. The evening setting highlights the nearness of the betrayal and approaching passion of Jesus.

The liturgical colour may be passion red, sackcloth or plain white. NB: references to the Psalms are to the version printed *APBA*.

With Great Thanksgiving Number 1 the proper preface for Maundy Thursday is used.

When the footwashing ceremony is observed, it is appropriate that it take place after the Gospel or after the sermon. The presider may wash the feet of members of the congregation, and they may also wash one

another's feet. In the latter case it is advisable to have more than one bowl, jug, and towel. Hymns or anthems may be sung, or silence may be kept.

At the end of the service, a silent Watch or Prayer Vigil may be observed until the Good Friday liturgy. To emphasise the corporate nature of this time of silent prayer, a shorter vigil may be kept with numbers of people together.

If, for pastoral reasons, it is necessary to celebrate the Eucharist more than once on this day, it is recommended that the Introduction and Washing of the Feet be omitted at all but the evening service.

A communal meal may be shared in association with the Eucharist. It should be a simple *agape* (love feast). Material for such an agape meal can be found in the *Book of Occasional Services* (ECUSA) and elsewhere. The practice of celebrating a Passover Seder in this week is discouraged. The Christian Passover is celebrated at the Great Vigil of Easter. Material prepared by the *Council of Christians and Jews* is useful on this matter.

A LITURGY FOR GOOD FRIDAY LITURGICAL NOTES

In the first centuries of the church, the Christian Passover (*Pasch*) was not divided into separate 'packages', independent services spread from Thursday to Sunday. Rather, it was seen as a unity, commemorating of Christ's triumph over death, celebrating both his passage from death to life and the Christian's own share in that victory through baptism.

In this context, as part of the larger celebration of the Paschal Mystery, it is appropriate that the liturgy of Good Friday provide an opportunity for meditation on the passion and cross of Jesus, as well as solemn prayer for the church and the world for which he died. But the service should not give the impression of being 'Jesus' funeral', complete with gloomy hymns. Moreover, the austerity of the liturgy should not preclude a note of triumph and joy, for the community gathers on Good Friday to *celebrate* the Lord's triumph on the cross – an event that can only be understood from the viewpoint of Easter.

Australian Anglican communities have had a wide variety of Good Friday services and customs, from Mattins and Ante-Communion to three-hour services and processions of witness. We encourage parishes to look back into their own history, describe the services and customs that have prevailed at different times, and consider what aspects of Christian belief were thus being expressed on Good Friday. This may help some communities make another transition to the use of the service we are proposing here. It represents an emerging ecumenical consensus based on the Ministry of the Word, the Prayers, the Proclamation of the Cross, and possibly the Ministry of the Eucharist.

It is a form of this three or four part liturgy that we offer here.

Setting

The liturgical colour for this day is passion red. In many places most of the hangings, frontals, pictures and other decorations will have been removed or veiled before this service (or at the conclusion of Maundy Thursday). It is appropriate for all crosses to be removed to enhance the impact of the proclamation of the cross in the course of the service.

Time

The Liturgy for Good Friday may take place at any time of the day and is not limited to the hours between 12 noon and 3.00 pm – the hours when Jesus was on the cross. The primary focus is on commemorating his passion and death. The time will be governed by local custom.

Music

It is appropriate for all music to be accompanied at a minimum level.

The psalm might be sung to a simple chant / tone without accompaniment. NB: Music resource suggestions will be added at a later date.

The shape of the service

Because this liturgy is a continuation of the Maundy Thursday commemoration, there is no music before the beginning, and no opening hymn. The ministers should enter in silence. After a suitable pause the Collect for the Day is sung/said.

The Ministry of the Word

The readings do not vary from year to year. The Passion reading is the climax of the Ministry of the Word. The *Liturgical Notes for Passion Sunday* for proclamation of the Passion should be consulted: it may be appropriate to present the Passion reading on this day in a different manner.

Care should be taken that the Passion reading and the preaching on this day do not foster anti-Semitism.

The Solemn Prayers

The Prayers, in the sequence provided have been part of the Good Friday liturgy since earliest times. In these prayers the church holds up before God all for whom Christ died.

The Prayers are set for three different leaders, but may be arranged for fewer or more voices. Silence is an important element of the Prayers.

The Solemn Prayers may be placed after the Proclamation of the Cross, a bringing to the foot of the cross the needs of the whole world.

Proclamation of the Cross

A wooden cross may be carried into the church for this part of the Liturgy. A set of optional versicles and responses is provided. It is recommended that the cross should be large enough to be the dominant symbol in the church on this day, and be placed where it is accessible to the people.

All may be invited to come to the cross, to make appropriate acts of devotion to the Crucified One. This may be done in silence, or suitable hymns or anthems, including the Reproaches may be sung. (A suitable version of the Reproaches may be found in the Church of England's *Lent, Holy Week and Easter* page 207, #15.)

When the devotions are completed the cross should remain in a prominent position.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

To receive Holy Communion or not is an important question for each community to answer for itself. If the Eucharist is celebrated it is done so in a 'low-key' manner, perhaps with the acclamations etc said instead of sung.

A linen cloth is placed on the Table for this part of the service. It is removed after the administration of Communion, and the consumption of any left-over elements.

There is no blessing or dismissal, and all depart in silence.

THE GREAT VIGIL OF EASTER

LITURGICAL NOTES

Because this liturgy is celebrated only once a year, and because it is unlike any other, it requires careful preparation. This will include not only the necessary liturgical items (fire, Paschal candle, candles, water, oil, etc.) but also of services sheets, music and so on. It is recommended that the service sheets for the people be as simple as possible. It might include music, hymnody and the like, when they occur within the liturgy, rather than moving from one book(let) to another.

Ministers and servers should rehearse, as should readers and musicians, especially as lighting for the first half of the liturgy will be very different from normal. The book for the presider needs to be prepared well in advance, and it is advisable for it to contain only the liturgical texts needed for this particular celebration.

The liturgical colour is white or gold.

Order of the Vigil

The Great Vigil consists of four parts:

- the Service of Light;
- the Ministry of the Word;
- the Ministry of Baptism, Confirmation, Reception and Renewal,
- together with renewal of Baptismal promises; and the celebration of the Easter Eucharist.

Over the centuries these elements have been arranged in various ways. The order as provided here is the most common, although it is often used with the Ministry of the Word and the Service of Light reversed. To begin with the Ministry of the Word suggests that the readings from the Hebrew (Old) Testament are preparatory to the presence of Christ. To begin with the Service of light suggests that all we do is seen in the light of the presence of the risen Christ.

It is fundamental to this liturgy that it begin in darkness. Whether this is after nightfall, late at night, or before daybreak, is a pastoral decision for the local parish/community. Many communities are finding the pre-dawn start to be very appropriate, especially as during the progress of the liturgy, light from the sun grows, until the eucharist is being celebrated in the light of the early morning. As midnight is to Christmas, so dawn has become part of the liturgical spirituality of Easter for many Anglicans.

The Service of Light

This part of the liturgy normally begins outside the building. The fire is kindled, the Paschal candle lit and carried into the darkened building, the peoples' candles are lit and the Easter Proclamation (*Exsultet*) sung.

The Paschal candle should be new every year. It should also be large, so that when in its place in the church it is clearly the major symbol of the resurrection. It should also

be large enough to outlast burning at all services during the Easter Season. For the traditional markings / decoration of the candle, see Appendix I.

The peoples' candles may be lit in various ways. Where people have come to the cross on Good Friday, it is highly appropriate that they come to the Paschal candle to light their own candle. This will take some time. Another option is to have a few people light their own candles from the Paschal candle and then pass the light on to others.

Versions of the Exsultet

The version of the *Exsultet* used in the text is based on that in the *Book of Common Prayer* (ECUSA). Other versions / translations of this text abound and may be substituted for the above: see, for example, the Church of England's book *Lent, Holy Week, Easter*, the *Book of Alternative Services* (Canada), or the *Roman Missal*. There are a number of musical settings from the traditional plainsong to simple modern versions.

By long tradition, the deacon sings the *Exsultet*. However, a priest may do so, or a lay cantor. What is important is that whoever sings this text should be able to do so very well. If there is no member of the community able to do this, then it should be said rather than sung. A better alternative might be for the entire community to sing the following metrical version.

Sing choirs of heaven! Let saints and angels sing! Around God's throne exult in harmony!

Now Jesus Christ is risen from the grave!

Salute your king in glorious symphony!

Sing choirs of earth! Behold your light has come! The glory of the Lord shines radiantly!

Lift up your hearts, for Christ has conquered death! The night is past; the day of light is here!

Sing Church of God! Exalt with joy outpoured!

The gospel trumpets tell of victory won!

Your Saviour lives: he's with you evermore!

Let all God's people shout the loud Amen!

(Tune: Woodlands AHB 109 or TiS 161)

The Ministry of the Word

This section may take place in a space other than the church building, e.g. a parish hall. The lectern should be centrally placed near the Paschal candle. The people sit for the readings and psalms and may stand with the ministers for the collects. They stand for the Alleluia Song and Gospel reading.

Baptism and the Renewal of Baptismal Promises

This section should be celebrated at the font. This may involve a procession, during which the *Gloria* ('Glory to God in the highest') could be sung, or some other hymn of Easter praise.

If there are candidates for Holy Baptism then they are baptized in the normal manner (see *APBA* page 59).

If the bishop is presiding, candidates for confirmation, reception or reaffirmation then receive the laying on of hands, as set out in *APBA*. This also should take place at the font.

Two forms of Renewal of Baptismal Promises are provided: one for when Holy Baptism has been celebrated, one where it has not. After the renewal, water may be sprinkled over the people as a reminder of their status as baptized persons. The Greeting of Peace follows immediately.

The Renewal of Baptismal Promises may be used at all Liturgies on Easter Sunday, replacing the Nicene Creed and the Confession and Absolution, i.e. the order may be as follows

- the Sermon
- the Prayers of the People
- the Renewal of Baptismal Promises the Greeting of Peace.

Easter Eucharist

It is suggested that Thanksgiving Prayer 2 (*APBA* page 130) be used.

Where Thanksgiving 1 (page 128) is used, a seasonal preface can be found on page 154

Where Thanksgiving 5 (page 139) is used, this paragraph may be inserted before "And so with everyone who believes in you ..."

We thank you that you gave us back the Risen One, full of grace and glory.

Because he rose again, we go with joy wherever Jesus sends.

Lord our God,

we give you thanks and praise.

If a baptism has been celebrated, this paragraph may be inserted after the one immediately above.

We thank you that in baptism you made us one with Jesus, and you brought us out of darkness into light. When you pour out your spirit you fill us with the gifts we need

to be your holy people. Lord our God,

we give you thanks and praise. The Great Fifty Days

The Easter Season extends from Easter Sunday to Pentecost. During this time the Paschal candle burns at all services. The use of an Alleluia Song before the Gospel reading, the addition of the Alleluias at the dismissal, a festive Great Thanksgiving, and the continued use of Easter hymns / songs all help give this 'season of seasons'

its special character and unity. The use of the Apostles' Creed in place of the Nicene Creed would help underline the baptismal character of this Season.