

5-1-1997

## Holy Week in the parish

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### Recommended Citation

Nevile, Donald C. (1997) "Holy Week in the parish," *Consensus*: Vol. 23 : Iss. 1 , Article 22.

Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol23/iss1/22>

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which is certainly provided in the various *ordos*. In the end, this is just as important as the prayers themselves.

One other criticism: the format of commentary followed by prayers in a separate section is problematic. After a time, one tends to stop flipping back and forth, and simply reads the commentary and prayers separately.

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### **“Holy Week in the Parish,” American Essays in Liturgy**

Don A. Neumann

Edited by Edward Foley

Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1991

56 pp. \$5.75

This is another in a series of short monographs published by the Order of St. Benedict in Collegeville, and designed to share the work of American liturgical scholars on topics of interest to Roman Catholic parishes. Although narrowly focused on the Roman tradition, the series is also of interest to those of a liturgical bent outside the Roman communion.

This essay is by Don Neumann, a parish priest from Pasadena, Texas. He reviews the ritual directions for Holy Week, and shares some of the history of the rituals, as well as giving suggestions for their practical and pastoral use. Although based on the Roman Holy Week celebrations, Lutherans will find these similar to our own, and will discover here a worthy spiritual model for parish celebrations.

The writer suggests that Holy Week be a time of retreat and spiritual discipline in which all members of the parish celebrate. “As we state in our parish bulletin, ‘Except for death or serious illness, every parishioner should be present for the liturgies of Holy Week’” (p. 11). For each of the liturgies of Holy Week he provides four perspectives: *Ritual Reflections*, *Historical Considerations*, *Pastoral Possibilities*, and *Foundational Principles*. Thus theology, history, and practise are fairly and adequately considered.

Neumann begins with Palm Sunday: here he finds exultation and desolation, fulfilment and emptying at once. He then deals briefly with Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Holy Week.

Lutherans will find the liturgy for Holy Thursday to be the most different from our own rite. The author outlines the Roman rites for this day: the consecration of chrism, the reconciliation of penitents, and foot washing; but there is no stripping of altar and chancel. He offers excellent suggestions regarding use of the rite for the reconciliation of Christians

alienated from the church who have returned, a rite which could play a greater part in Lutheran formation than it presently does. We too readily receive inactive members back into the church, with little examination of the reasons for inactivity, or the reason for return.

Aware that many parishes also include a Seder Meal as part of their Maundy Thursday liturgy, he hesitantly endorses this as a preparation for the Liturgy itself—but only as “part of our heritage” (p. 17) from the Hebrew origins of Christianity.

Since 1955, the Romans, along with most other Christians (but not Lutherans!) have encouraged reception of Holy Communion on Good Friday. Neumann provides an interesting commentary on this. Principally, he says, the focus of the Good Friday liturgy is on the metaphor of *wood*. This is an exceptionally rich and fruitful symbol, combining both tragic and triumphant aspects of the day.

Holy Saturday is a “day of repose” leading up to the Great Vigil. Neumann’s interpretation of the Vigil is expansive: it should begin after dark on Saturday, about 10:00 p.m., and continue until just before dawn on Sunday about 4:00 a.m. It should be stational and unhurried: “on this night, sleep is not an issue” (p. 40). Furthermore, any attempts to domesticate the Vigil by truncating its power will result poorly. “More than anything else, this night requires a parish’s willingness to risk that the power of ritual is beyond our understanding and control” (p. 44). Make it long, rich, and dramatic, he suggests, for “on this night, different from every other night, we are invited to commune with God who never sleeps” (p. 46). Everything—oil, water, time, bread, and wine—should be used liberally.

The focus of the Vigil is of course on Holy Baptism. He suggests that the parish avoid infant baptisms on this night. In his guidelines for the preparation and conduct of baptisms, he reflects not so much the western pattern of pre-baptismal catechesis and preparation, but moreso the eastern pattern of post-baptismal mystagogy, thus preserving for baptism its radical shock value for the initiate. “In earlier times the elect were not told the details of the baptismal liturgy. It was believed that if the rites of initiation were to maintain their power, the candidates should not know them beforehand. Such discreet preparation contributed to the awesome and transforming nature of these rites. The same is possible today...Rehearsals should never occur for the elect before the Vigil, since these rob the liturgy of its pneumatic power...Candidates for baptism should never practise” (pp. 37–38).

What a different pattern from our tiresome admonitions and instruction before baptism! Perhaps there is something here we have missed! As the ELCIC embarks on a program of adult catechumenate, this is something to consider.

The monograph ends with the Vigil, the Easter Sunday liturgies properly belonging to the Easter season, and not to Holy Week.

The book will be a valuable addition on the liturgy shelf of those pastors and laypersons who are concerned about the lack of life and participation

in the Holy Week liturgies. It provides a window on another tradition much like our own, and gives background, theology, and pastoral suggestions for enriching the parish celebration of these events.

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### **Praying the Catechism**

Donald W. Johnson

Winnipeg: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, 1995  
211 pp.

The occasion for the preparation of this book is the development of an Adult Catechumenate in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. The “reintroduction” of this ancient rite acknowledges that “Christendom” has ended and that Christians are once more a minority—in influence if not in number. The process of the Adult Catechumenate is intended both for those who have not been baptized and for those who have and are now, as adults, awakening to the call of Christ. This book is intended to be given to such persons at the time in the process when they are accepted in the congregation as “Candidates for Baptism”; the most advantageous time for this is the beginning of Lent. It provides them with a discipline “to put off the old” and “to put on Christ”, which climaxes in Baptism or the Affirmation of Baptism during the Easter Vigil.

The book provides 90 occasions of meditation, reflection, and prayer: 40 days before and 50 days after Baptism. Thus if Baptism occurs at the Easter Vigil, the 90 days cover the seasons of Lent and Easter. Based essentially on Luther’s *Small Catechism*, Johnson’s intent is to *pray* the Catechism rather than memorize it or discuss it—though these are not ruled out. Accordingly, we made it our daily devotion during Lent and Easter. To emphasize prayer and meditation, and to extend the discipline over 90 days, Johnson augments the Catechism by drawing texts from Scripture and appropriate liturgies (from the *Lutheran Book of Worship*) especially in the sacramental sections. After the section on Baptism he includes a section on “Gifts”.

The book is a breakthrough, not only in its use of the *Small Catechism* as the basis for meditation and prayer, but also in its incorporation of the Catechism, the liturgy, the flow of the Church Year, and the fellowship of the congregation into the process of “making disciples”. Each devotion begins with a text from the *Small Catechism* (or Scripture of liturgy), enjoins a time of reflection, offers several paragraphs of pointed commentary which push the pray-er to probe her/his own life in society and church, and