**TOP 10 TRIDUUM PRO TIPS**

**Pro Tip #10: Highlight the unity of the three days of the Triduum**

Over the three days of the Triduum, we enter into the entirety of the paschal mystery. If we treat each day as separate events, we miss helping our assemblies experience the fullness of Christ’s love for us. Some may simply choose their favorite celebration to go to and miss the unified movement from the Lord’s Supper to the Cross, from vigiling at the empty tomb to being sent from font and altar to announce the message: Christ is risen!

Catechize that the Triduum is one unified event. First, instead of having separate worship aids for each liturgy, create one integrated worship aid for the entire Triduum that includes all the liturgies from Holy Thursday through the end of Easter Sunday. Even if a person attends only one of the days of the Triduum, the worship aid lets them know that they may be missing out on something more.

Second, the presider for these most important liturgies of the year should be the pastor of the community, at least for the major liturgies of the Triduum—the Mass of the Lord’s Supper, the Celebration of the Lord’s Passion, the Easter Vigil, and the principal Mass of the community on Easter Sunday. Having the same presider at all these liturgies catechizes about the unity of the Triduum and creates a sense of one progressive liturgical celebration spanning three days.

**Pro Tip #9: Use the best of your liturgical ministers for the Triduum**

If the Triduum is the “high point of the entire liturgical year” (Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the Calendar, #18), then we should bring the best of our resources to these three days. So why be content with getting liturgical ministers to "sign up" to serve on these days? Merely asking for volunteers to be liturgical ministers for these liturgies doesn’t convey the importance of the Triduum. Instead, carefully choose your liturgical ministers. Select from your best altar servers, lectors, psalmists, and Communion ministers those who exhibit not only the outstanding skills required for their ministry but also the heart and humility of a minister. Make your invitation to serve at these most important liturgies of the year a public recognition of their commitment to serve the assembly and an affirmation of their pursuit of excellence in ministry.

**Pro Tip #8: Avoid historicizing the liturgies, especially Holy Thursday**

In 1988, the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship issued a Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts called *Paschale Solemnitatis* (PS). This universal document is required reading for anyone preparing the liturgies of Lent, Holy Week, Triduum, and Easter. In that letter, the Triduum is called the “Easter Triduum” that begins with the Mass of the Lord’s Supper and ends with Vespers on Easter Sunday (PS #27). This is an important point because the celebration of Holy Thursday and Good Friday are already Easter celebrations! On any day of the Triduum, we do not pretend that Christ has not died or that Christ is not risen. We are always an Easter people who celebrate both the passion and the triumph of the Cross.

Keeping this in mind, avoid making Holy Thursday a reenactment of a past event rather than a memorial of Christ who is present and acting in our world today:
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- Keep the washing of feet in its proper place after the homily. Do not insert it within the Gospel reading. Although this may be quite moving and the washing of the feet imitates Jesus’s act of love for his disciples on the night before he died, it is not a re-enactment of that moment of Jesus’s life. It is a ritual that signifies our participation in Christ’s mission of love and service to one another and to those in need in our world today.

- Do not assign 12 persons to be those whose feet are washed. Nowhere do the rubrics say to use exactly 12 people, as though they are the 12 apostles. The washing of feet “represents the service and charity of Christ” (PS #51), not a depiction of the Last Supper. In addition, costumes or any kind of play-acting of the foot-washing scene of the Last Supper in place of the ritual washing of feet is not appropriate.

**Pro Tip #7: Make the reservation chapel a chapel, not a tomb, garden, or grotto**

In 2001, the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued a Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy, which gave principles and guidelines for liturgical practices that take place outside of the liturgy or are local customs and traditions of the people. Regarding the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament after the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, that directory said:

> It is necessary to instruct the faithful on the meaning of the reposition: it is an austere solemn conservation of the Body of Christ for the community of the faithful which takes part in the liturgy of Good Friday and for the viaticum of the infirmed. It is an invitation to silent and prolonged adoration of the wondrous sacrament instituted by Jesus on this day...In reference to the altar of repose, therefore, the term “sepulcher” should be avoided, and its decoration should not have any suggestion of a tomb. The tabernacle on this altar should not be in the form of a tomb or funerary urn. The Blessed Sacrament should be conserved in a closed tabernacle and should not be exposed in a monstrance. (Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy, #141)

The place for the altar of repose should look more like a chapel for solemn prayer than like a garden, candlelit tomb, or darkened theater. In fact, the Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts recommends that if the church's tabernacle is already located in a separate chapel, the place of repose and adoration should be there:

> For the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, a place should be prepared and adorned in such a way as to be conducive to prayer and meditation; seriousness appropriate to the liturgy of these days is enjoined so that all abuses are avoided or suppressed. When the tabernacle is located in a chapel separated from the central part of the church, it is appropriate to prepare the place of repose and adoration there. (PS #49)
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Do not decorate the place of reservation of the Blessed Sacrament as though it were a garden or a tomb, “for the chapel of repose is not prepared so as to represent the Lord’s burial but for the custody of the eucharistic bread that will be distributed in communion on Good Friday” (PS #55).

When it comes to Holy Thursday liturgy—or any liturgy—simple, natural, elegant, and genuine environment is always better than staged, historicized, otherworldly, or overly manufactured settings. There is great beauty in humble art and a simple space which reflect the humility of Jesus and of those called to adore him. Trust the simple space, for there you will find Christ.

Pro Tip #6: Provide a place for prayer and adoration of the Cross after Good Friday

At the very end of the Good Friday liturgy, we find the only time in any liturgical ritual when all are instructed to genuflect to something other than the Blessed Sacrament. Tonight, as we begin the silent vigil into Holy Saturday, we genuflect to the Holy Cross, the place where water and blood flowed to give us the Water of Life and the Blood of Salvation. (See the Roman Missal, The Passion of the Lord, #32.) Let this gesture be slow and intentional, directed without question to the Cross and nothing else.

Then go one step further. With the same care given to preparing the place of repose for the Blessed Sacrament the night before, prepare a place for adoration of the Cross where the faithful may remain in prayer. This place may even be the same place as was used for the Blessed Sacrament the night before (see PS #71).

Pro Tip #5: Get your local firefighters involved with preparing the paschal fire

Symbols should communicate clearly and truthfully what they mean. At the beginning of the Easter Vigil, the new fire symbolizes the “light of Christ rising in glory [to] dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds” (Roman Missal, The Easter Vigil, #14).

The Circular Letter says that the flames of the new fire “should be such that they genuinely dispel the darkness and light up the night” (PS #82). A tiny fire in a barbecue grill does not adequately reflect Christ who breaks apart the darkness of death.

There are people in your community who not only can help you prepare an ample, blazing fire but also make it burn efficiently and safely. These are your firefighters. When you enlist their help, you will also be engaging many more people in your community in the preparation and celebration of the Triduum.

Pro Tip #4: Honor the names of the elect

The Catechism says, "God calls each one by name. Everyone’s name is sacred. The name is the icon of the person. It demands respect as a sign of the dignity of the one who bears it” (#2158). Those to be baptized are not required to take on a saint’s name if their given name is not already a saint name. By Canon Law, they only need to have a name that is not “foreign to Christian sensibility”
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(#855). That's a pretty wide breadth of possibilities. (One year, we baptized Pebbles with her given name because she loved her name and the family who gave it to her.) So Aryas, Summers, Archers, Chases, and all who bear wild and wonderful names, rejoice!

Revere and honor the given names of your elect. In the Litany of Saints at the Easter Vigil, include their names in the litany. (See Roman Missal, The Easter Vigil, #43.) If their name is already a saint name or if they have chosen a patron saint, include it among the names of the saints. If their name is not a saint name, it still can be included at the section beginning at “Bring these chosen ones to new birth...” If you have only a few people to baptize, you might consider adapting this line to include all the names of your elect, something like: “Bring N., N., N., and N., your chosen ones to new birth...”

When you honor the names of the newly-baptized, you also help to make Communion the highpoint of their initiation. For adults and children who are baptized at the Easter Vigil, the “climax of their initiation and the center of the whole Christian life” is the Eucharist (RCIA #243). But often this moment in the Easter Vigil gets lost because the experience of Baptism and Confirmation are so visually memorable compared to the intimacy of sharing in Communion. The Roman Missal (The Easter Vigil, #64) and the RCIA (#243) both ask us to highlight the climax of initiation by directing the priest, before he says, “Behold, the Lamb of God...,” to say a few words to the newly baptized “about receiving their first Communion and about the excellence of this great mystery.”

There are no specific words given here. So your priest can say his own invitation to those about to share in Communion for the first time. Whatever he says, even if improvised, should be prepared beforehand so it feels natural. Here is one example of how this might look and sound. After the Lamb of God, the priest calls forward each newly-baptized person by name to come to the altar or to the place where they will share in Communion. Once they are in place, he takes the Body and Blood of Christ and shows them to the newly baptized as he says: “You have been washed clean and anointed to be God’s very own. Now, taste and see the goodness of the Lord who has prepared these holy gifts for you, his holy people. Let all your hungers be filled at this holy banquet. For behold, the Lamb of God...”

Pro Tip #3: End Triduum in prayer

The three days of the Triduum are counted from nightfall on Thursday to nightfall on Friday (day 1); nightfall Friday to nightfall on Saturday (day 2); and nightfall Saturday to nightfall on Sunday (day 3). The General Norms of the Liturgical Year and the Calendar says that the Triduum “closes with evening prayer on Easter Sunday” (#19). Everyone who coordinates the music or liturgies or presides at them during the Triduum is probably exhausted by the time Sunday night comes! So having one more liturgy to prepare isn’t really feasible. But you might consider giving your parishioners and parish leaders a simplified Evening Prayer script to use at home on Sunday night to end the Triduum. This might be as simple as giving them the words of Psalm 118, a brief Scripture reading, and the text for the Magnificat. When people gather for their Easter dinners at home on this day, they are often looking for some kind of prayer to use with their family. Help them conclude the three days in a simple but special way.
Pro Tip #2: Pay attention to who is missing

The Triduum is the one time of the year that the entire local community is called to come together in a single liturgy for the Mass of the Lord’s Supper, the Celebration of the Passion of the Lord, and the Easter Vigil. In the USA, a parish may repeat the Celebration of the Passion of the Lord but only with permission of the local bishop. (See Roman Missal, The Passion of the Lord, #4.) The union of the entire parish community at the high point of the liturgical year shows the unity of the Church and the communion of all the members of Christ’s body. If some members of the community are missing or left out, the body is incomplete.

Who is missing from your community among your Triduum assemblies? Among those preparing the liturgies? Among the liturgical ministers and leaders? Whose languages and songs are missing? Are young and elderly members both present, seen, and serving in significant roles? Are women and men evenly represented in the ministries and in the music chosen throughout the Triduum?

Pro Tip #1: Don't stay in the dark

Rev. Paul Turner calls this “probably the most ignored rubric in Holy Week” (Glory in the Cross: Holy Week in the Third Edition of The Roman Missal, Liturgical Press, 127). Christ the Light has dispelled the darkness, so don’t keep people in the dark. Turn on the lights of the church before the Exsultet is sung. (See Roman Missal, The Easter Vigil, #17.)

Many communities love the dramatic nature of the beginning of the Easter Vigil, and who isn’t moved by the Exsultet sung in a church bathed by candlelight? Some communities even extend that candlelight quality through the readings, leaving only enough light for the lectors to read their text while keeping the rest of the assembly in almost total darkness. Some communities turn on all the lights at the Gloria or at the Alleluia, or they slowly raise the lights throughout the readings.

Doing anything but what the rubric calls for obscures the primary meaning of the Paschal Candle—that in Christ, there is no darkness. It also adds the possible misconception that the light of Christ does not illuminate all of salvation history but just the New Testament parts. Plus it treats the assembly like an audience in a darkened theater while the main actors perform their parts in the spotlight.
1. Remembering

The first step in evaluating is to remember what happened. In the catechumenate process, this is called mystagogy.

- What did you see? What did you hear? What emotion did you feel?
- What was especially powerful? Negative responses are as valid as positive ones.

It is more helpful to use the phrase “I felt ________.” It is less helpful to use the phrase “I liked (didn’t like) ________.”

2. Catechizing

What we remember about our worship shapes how we believe. Choose two to four particularly powerful memories. It could be a memory of a symbol, a song, an action, a phrase, or a sound. Then, for each memory, ask these questions:

a. What did (the thing I’m remembering) tell us about God?
b. What did (the thing I’m remembering) tell us about Jesus?
c. What did (the thing I’m remembering) tell us about the church?
d. What did (the thing I’m remembering) tell us about our community?
e. What did (the thing I’m remembering) tell us about myself?

The collective memory of our celebration, connecting that to our tradition, and going deeper into what we believe about our memory is how we, as a parish, are “doing” catechesis.

3. Evaluating

Our liturgy, then, can be evaluated on how well it spoke about each of these areas:

a. Were we satisfied with how this liturgy spoke to us of who God is? What was said clearly that we want to keep? What needs to be improved?
b. Were we satisfied with how this liturgy spoke to us of who Jesus is? What was said clearly that we want to keep? What needs to be improved?
c. Were we satisfied with how this liturgy spoke to us of what we believe about church? What was said clearly that we want to keep? What needs to be improved?
d. Were we satisfied with how this liturgy spoke to us of what we believe about community? What was said clearly that we want to keep? What needs to be improved?
e. Were we satisfied with how this liturgy spoke of who I am as a disciple? What was said clearly that we want to keep? What needs to be improved?

4. Changing

Our final evaluation of the overall Triduum might look at these questions:

a. How did this year’s Triduum make us different as a parish?
b. What goal will we set for ourselves to achieve as a parish next year?
c. How did this year’s Triduum make the world a better place?
d. What goal will we set for making the world a better place next year?