

Veiling of Images and Crosses During Lent

Are images and crosses to be covered during Lent?

Images and crosses do not need to be veiled at all. But they may be veiled for the last two weeks of Lent. During the preparation of the Roman Missal, 3rd edition, the Vatican decided to again permit this practice provided that the Conference of Bishops of a given country approved.

In the Roman Missal, 3rd edition, you find the following in the rubrics for the Fifth Sunday of Lent:

In the Dioceses of the United States, the practice of covering crosses and images throughout the church from this Sunday [the Fifth Sunday of Lent] may be observed. Crosses remain covered until the end of the celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday, but images remain covered until the beginning of the Easter Vigil.

Why are coverings only used for the end of Lent?

Preceding the revisions of Vatican II, this period was known as Passiontide, a more somber period of Lent. Currently, Lent has a single united character that leads us to Holy Week and the three days of Triduum where the more passion-oriented themes occur. The permission to veil images and crosses reminds us of this older Passiontide tradition.

Are crosses to be veiled for the Good Friday ritual?

They may be. Good Friday offers two forms for the Adoration of the Holy Cross. The first form uses a veiled cross. The second form uses an unveiled cross. See the Roman Missal for Good Friday for the details.

Are other crosses to be veiled for Good Friday?

They may be. The rubrics for the end of the Holy Thursday Mass say the following:

[T]he altar is stripped and, if possible, the crosses are removed from the church. It is expedient that any crosses which remain in the church be veiled. (41).

However, when the second form for the Good Friday adoration is used the main cross is not veiled.

What color are the veils to be?

Traditionally, they are made of simple, lightweight, unadorned violet purple cloth.