

CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP
AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS

DIRECTORY
ON POPULAR PIETY AND THE LITURGY

PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES

Vatican City
December 2001

Eastertide

The Annual Blessing of Family Homes

152. The annual blessing of families takes place in their homes during Eastertide - or at other times of the year. This pastoral practice is highly recommended to parish priests and to their assistant priests since it is greatly appreciated by the faithful and affords a precious occasion to recollect God's constant presence among Christian families. It is also an opportunity to invite the faithful to live according to the Gospel and to exhort parents and children to preserve and promote the mystery of being "a domestic church"(156).

The Via Lucis

153. A pious exercise called the *Via Lucis* has developed and spread to many regions in recent years. Following the model of the *Via Crucis*, the faithful process while meditating on the various appearances of Jesus - from his Resurrection to his Ascension - in which he showed his glory to the disciples who awaited the coming of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 14, 26; 16, 13-15; Lk 24, 49), strengthened their faith, brought to completion his teaching on the Kingdom and more closely defined the sacramental and hierarchical structure of the Church.

Through the *Via Lucis*, the faithful recall the central event of the faith - the resurrection of Christ - and their discipleship in virtue of Baptism, the paschal sacrament by which they have passed from the darkness of sin to the bright radiance of the light of grace (cf. Col 1, 13; Ef 5, 8).

For centuries the *Via Crucis* involved the faithful in the first moment of the Easter event, namely the Passion, and helped to fix its most important aspects in their consciousness. Analogously, the *Via Lucis*, when celebrated in fidelity to the Gospel

text, can effectively convey a living understanding to the faithful of the second moment of the Pascal event, namely the Lord's Resurrection.

The *Via Lucis* is potentially an excellent pedagogy of the faith, since "per crucem ad lucem". Using the metaphor of a journey, the *Via Lucis* moves from the experience of suffering, which in God's plan is part of life, to the hope of arriving at man's true end: liberation, joy and peace which are essentially paschal values.

The *Via Lucis* is a potential stimulus for the restoration of a "culture of life" which is open to the hope and certitude offered by faith, in a society often characterized by a "culture of death", despair and nihilism.

Devotion to the Divine Mercy

154. In connection with the octave of Easter, recent years have witnessed the development and diffusion of a special devotion to the Divine Mercy based on the writings of Sr. Faustina Kowalska who was canonized 30 April 2000. It concentrates on the mercy poured forth in Christ's death and resurrection, fount of the Holy Spirit who forgives sins and restores joy at having been redeemed. Since the liturgy of the Second Sunday of Easter or Divine Mercy Sunday - as it is now called (157) - is the natural locus in which to express man's acceptance of the Redeemer's mercy, the faithful should be taught to understand this devotion in the light of the liturgical celebrations of these Easter days. Indeed, "the paschal Christ is the definitive incarnation of mercy, his living sign which is both historico-salvific and eschatological. At the same time, the Easter liturgy places the words of the psalm on our lips: "I shall sing forever of the Lord's mercy" (Ps 89[88] 2)"(158).

The Pentecost Novena

155. The New Testament tells us that during the period between the Ascension and Pentecost "all...joined in continuous prayer, together with several women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers" (Acts 1, 14) while they awaited being "clothed with the power from on high" (Lk 24, 49). The pious exercise of the Pentecost novena, widely practiced among the faithful, emerged from prayerful reflection on this salvific event.

Indeed, this novena is already present in the Missal and in the Liturgy of the Hours, especially in the second vespers of Pentecost: the biblical and eucological texts, in different ways, recall the disciples' expectation of the Paraclete. Where possible, the Pentecost novena should consist of the solemn celebration of vespers. Where such is not possible, the novena should try to reflect the liturgical themes of the days from Ascension to the Vigil of Pentecost.

In some places, the week of prayer for the unity Christians is celebrated at this time (159).

Pentecost

Pentecost Sunday

156. Eastertide concludes with Pentecost Sunday, the fiftieth day, and its commemoration of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the apostles (cf. Acts 2, 1-4), the Church's foundation, and the beginning of its mission to all nations and peoples. The protracted celebration of the vigil Mass has a particular importance in cathedrals and some parishes, since it reflects the intense persevering prayer of the Christian community in imitation of the Apostles united in prayer with Mother of Jesus (160).

The mystery of Pentecost exhorts us to prayer and commitment to mission and enlightens popular piety which is a "continued sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church. He arouses faith, hope and charity, in the hearts [of the faithful] and those ecclesial virtues which make popular piety valuable. The same Spirit ennobles the numerous and varied ways of transmitting the Christian message according to the culture and customs of all times and places"(161).

The faithful are well used to invoking the Holy Spirit especially when initiating new undertakings or works or in times of particular difficulties. Often they use formulas taken from the celebration of Pentecost (*Veni Creator Spiritus, Veni Sancte Spiritus*) (162) or short prayers of supplication (*Emitte Spiritum tuum et creabuntur*). The third glorious mystery of the Rosary invites the faithful to meditate on the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In Confirmation they are conscious of receiving the Spirit of wisdom and counsel to guide and assist them; the Spirit of strength and light to help them make important decisions and to sustain the trials of life. The faithful are also aware that through Baptism their bodies become temples of the Holy Spirit to be respected and honored, even in death, and they know that the body will be raised up on the last day through the power of the Holy Spirit.

While the Holy Spirit gives access to communion with God in prayer, he also prompts us towards service of our neighbor by encountering him, by reconciliation, by witness, by a desire for justice and peace, by renewal of outlook, by social progress and missionary commitment (163). In some Christian communities, Pentecost is celebrated as a "day of intercession for the missions"(164).