



NewsLetter

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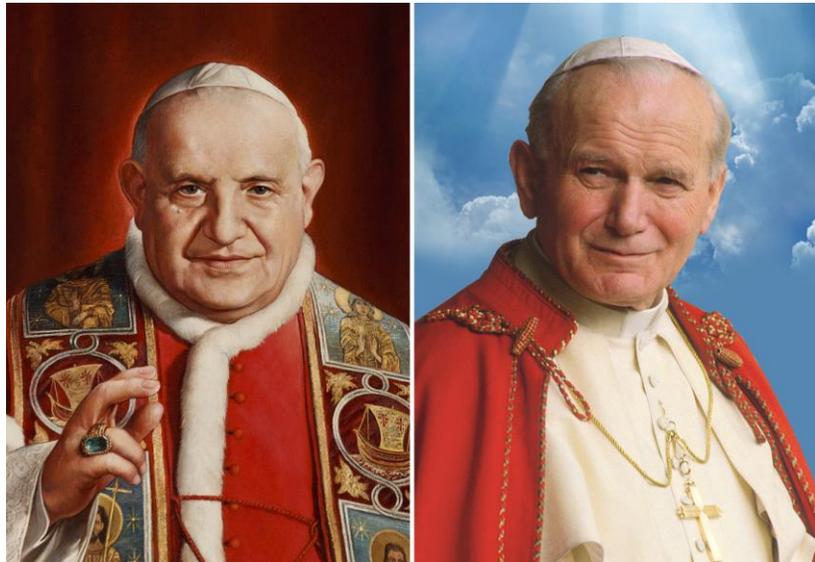
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*For the honor of the Blessed Trinity,
the exaltation of the Catholic faith and the increase of the Christian life,
by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul,
and our own, after due deliberation and frequent prayer for divine assistance,
and having sought the counsel of many of our brother Bishops,
we declare and define Blessed John XXIII and John Paul II to be Saints
and we enroll them among the Saints,
decreeing that they are to be venerated as such by the whole Church.
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

- Formula of Canonization by Pope Francis, April 27, 2014

Sacred Music Survey Results Sent to Pontifical Council for Culture

The Secretariat of Divine Worship received 65 responses to the survey on sacred music that was sent out at the request of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments and the Pontifical Council for Culture. Most of the responses came from dioceses and archdioceses, but included seminary and theology faculties, Catholic music publishers, and Catholic music organizations. The Secretariat compiled a summary of all the responses, which has now been sent, together with the full text of all the submissions, to Gianfranco Cardinal Ravasi of the Pontifical Council for Culture.

Disposal and Replacement of the Paschal Candle

In the February 2010 *Newsletter* article, “Eighteen Questions on the Paschal Triduum,” two of those questions dealt with the appropriate specifications of the paschal candle and a suggestion for the case of mission churches and cluster parishes where only one Vigil will be celebrated, but where two or more paschal candles will be needed for the rest of the year. A question not covered in that article, but which has recently come to the Secretariat of Divine Worship, asks what the appropriate protocol is for old paschal candles.

The first response must be that they may not be reused. The paschal candle must be new each year and receive its blessing at the Paschal Vigil. *Paschale Sollemnitatis*, the 1988 Circular Letter concerning the preparation and celebration of the Easter feasts, states that the paschal candle must “be renewed each year” (no. 82). This does not mean that the old candle must be thrown away. Most suppliers of candles accept the return of used candles (and will sometimes even offer a discount for the exchange). These suppliers will then recycle the wax to produce new candles. If, for some reason, a parish is unable to recycle the candle wax, then the old paschal candle, as a blessed object (a sacramental) must be appropriately disposed of. This could involve burning the candle in a devotional manner (privately as opposed to publicly and liturgically) or even burying the candle in blessed ground. Candles are made to be burned, however, and it is better to find a way either to recycle or burn the wax.

As a reminder, *Paschale Sollemnitatis*, nos. 83 and 99, offers good advice regarding an option for the procession with the paschal candle during the Vigil, and regarding proper use of the candle after the Vigil for Easter and for the rest of the year:

83. The procession, by which the people enter the church, should be led by the light of the paschal candle alone. Just as the children of Israel were guided at night by a pillar of fire, so similarly Christians follow the risen Christ. There is no reason why to each response “Thanks be to God” there should not be added some acclamation in honor of Christ.

99. The paschal candle has its proper place either by the ambo or by the altar and should be lit at least in all the more solemn liturgical celebrations of the season until Pentecost Sunday, whether at Mass, or at Morning and Evening Prayer. After the Easter season the candle should be kept with honor in the baptistery, so that in the celebration of Baptism the candles of the baptized may be lit from it. In the celebration of funerals the paschal candle should be placed near the coffin to indicate that the death of a Christian is his own Passover. The paschal candle should not otherwise be lit nor placed in the sanctuary outside the Easter season.

Finally, the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* states the following regarding the use of incense for the paschal candle, “Three swings of the thurible are used to incense: the Most Blessed Sacrament, a relic of the Holy Cross and images of the Lord exposed for public veneration, the offerings for the Sacrifice of the Mass, the altar cross, the *Book of the Gospels*, the paschal candle, the Priest, and the people” (no. 277).

Disposition of an Altar, Altar Stone, and the Remanding of a Church to Secular Use

One of the more beautiful rites in the Church is the *Rite of Dedication of a Church and Altar*, majestic precisely because it seeks, with profound solemnity, to honor two great mysteries of Christian life: Baptism and Sacrifice. The altar and the walls of the church are treated as the reborn Christian by being bathed in blessed water and anointed with sacred Chrism. To be marked with Chrism is a profound reality and leaves an indelible mark. It is precisely the Sacraments that use the sacred Chrism, which are the unrepeatable Sacraments in the Church. Once marked with this sacramental of the Holy Spirit, one is permanently marked. Perhaps this is a main reason why the Church has never seen it fit or necessary to develop a rite for the relegation of a church or altar to profane use, precisely because she envisions an anointed church in a similar fashion to the Christian: the baptismal anointing is permanent; there is no way to undo it. Salt may become insipid (cf. Mk 9:50), but it never stops being salt.

Sadly, it can happen that a Christian will renounce his or her Christianity, and it can happen that a church and altar will no longer be used for divine worship.

Disposition of an Altar

Canon 1238 in the Code of Canon Law states: “§1. An altar loses its dedication or blessing according to the norm of can. 1212. §2. Altars, whether fixed or movable, do not lose their dedication or blessing if the church or other sacred place is relegated to profane uses.” It will often be the case that even though a church may need to be remanded to secular use, the altar of the church is still worthy of continued sacred use (for example in a new church building, chapel or even in a Catholic cemetery). When this happens, the altar does not need to be re-blessed or re-dedicated. When the altar can no longer be kept for sacred use, the first and best option may well be to bury it in blessed ground or to destroy it in some manner and bury the remains. The ease of this solution will, of course, depend on the size and material makeup of the altar. It is permitted for the bishop to issue a decree relegating the altar to secular use, but given the centrality and importance of the altar in Christian worship, it is difficult to imagine an acceptable profane setting for it.

Disposition of an Altar Stone

In the 1917 Code of Canon Law, canon 1198 included the provision that a fixed altar could contain, instead of a full stone *mensa*, a much smaller “altar stone” that would be fit into the altar *mensa* and that would be large enough to place the host and most of the chalice upon it. In addition, it was prescribed that the relics of the saints should be placed within either the *mensa* or the altar stone, in accord with the norm of liturgical law. In the renewed rites following the Second Vatican Council, there no longer exists the provision for an altar stone. This is not to say that an older altar that has an altar stone must have it removed, but whenever a new altar is constructed, the altar stone is no longer foreseen.

In addition, the *Rite of Dedication of a Church and Altar* includes an important change from the previous law, “A reliquary must not be placed upon the altar or set into the table of the altar; it must be placed beneath the table of the altar, as the design of the altar permits” (chapter II, no. 5c). Perhaps the main reason why an altar stone is no longer foreseen is because relics are no longer allowed to be placed in the *mensa* of the altar (or in the altar stone if the mensa is not of stone).

The question now arises regarding the proper disposition of an altar stone when it is no longer to be kept for sacred use. The same possibilities that pertain to the disposition of an altar would similarly apply for the disposition of an altar stone. It would, however, be much easier to be buried or destroyed than a full sized altar.

Remanding of a Church to Secular Use

Canon 1212 of the Code of Canon Law states, “Sacred places lose their dedication or blessing if they have been destroyed in large part, or have been turned over permanently to profane use by decree of the competent ordinary or in fact.” It is because a church may not be built without the “express written consent of the diocesan bishop” (can. 1215.1) that Church law also says it is up to the local bishop alone to reduce a church building to profane use.

This process is spelled out somewhat in canon 1222 of the Code of Canon Law: “§1. If a church cannot be used in any way for divine worship and there is no possibility of repairing it, the diocesan bishop can relegate it to profane but not sordid use. §2. Where other grave causes suggest that a church no longer be used for divine worship, the diocesan bishop, after having heard the presbyteral council, can relegate it to profane but not sordid use, with the consent of those who legitimately claim rights for themselves in the church and provided that the good of souls suffers no detriment thereby.” The bishop effects this relegation by issuing a formal decree removing the church’s dedication or blessing.

Whether one is dealing with a church building, the altar, or a simple altar stone, it must be remembered that these are all places and objects intimately enmeshed in the holiest rites of the Church that have served the purpose of prayer and sanctification for many Catholics, often for many years. They must be treated with the utmost care and respect and their disposition must be handled with equally great reverence and delicacy.

Restructuring of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions

On January 28, 2014, the Board of Directors of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions (FDLC) unanimously passed a revision to the FDLC Bylaws. This change was the fruit of a two year self-study which produced five significant goals, including a vision to streamline the FDLC's structure and operations. Changes to the bylaws included a restructuring of the Board itself, reducing its membership and reconfiguring the structure of its standing committees and project teams.

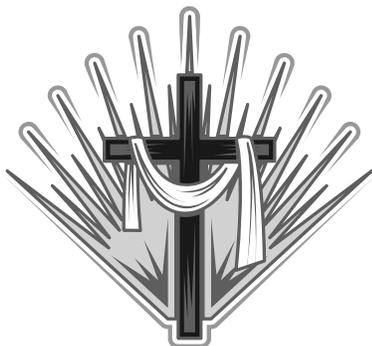
Since elections will be conducted this spring in five of those regions and a full complement of new Board members will not take office until October, an interim slate of officers was elected to lead the FDLC. Reverend Thomas C. Ranzino, a priest of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, will serve as Chair ("Administrator"). Father Ranzino has ably served on the Board since 2003.

He succeeds outgoing Chair, Msgr. John H. Burton of Camden, New Jersey, who had served on the Board since 1993 and as its chair since 1998. The Committee on Divine Worship offers its congratulations and best wishes to Msgr. Burton for his distinguished service to the FDLC and to the Committee, especially regarding the FDLC's efforts in the national catechetical process in preparation for the implementation of the *Roman Missal, Third Edition*.

The Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions has a long history with the Committee on Divine Worship. In 1966-1967, Chairs and Secretaries of diocesan liturgical commissions met in conjunction with the Liturgical Weeks sponsored by the Liturgical Conference. By October 1968, the then-Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) convened a meeting of Diocesan Liturgical Commission personnel in Chicago in order to prepare for the 1969 *Ordo Missae*. An "Advisory Committee to the BCL" was established, made up of representatives from each of the twelve regions of the USA.

In February 1969, that Advisory Commission became a "Federation of Commissions." The BCL conducted an election among the chairs and secretaries of the diocesan commissions in the USA, electing two from each region. They met for the first time in Pittsburgh and became the charter members of the Board of Directors. By January 1970, the "Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions" was formally established and a Constitution and Bylaws were adopted. The Chair of the Board and its Executive Director sit as *ex officio* consultants to the Committee on Divine Worship, and the Chairman of the Committee on Divine Worship customarily addresses the National Meeting of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions each October.

The Committee for Divine Worship looks forward to many years of collaboration with the FDLC and its members, who serve bishops throughout the United States in offices of worship and on Diocesan Liturgical Commissions.



**Happy Easter from the
Committee on Divine Worship
and the Secretariat of Divine Worship!**