

The Veiling of Images and Crosses **from the USCCB Committee on Divine Worship**

1. Does the new Missale Romanum allow for the veiling of statues and crosses?

The *Missale Romanum, editio typica tertia*, provides a rubric at the beginning of the texts for the Fifth Sunday of Lent, which allows that: “the practice of covering crosses and images in the Church from the Fifth Sunday of Lent is permitted, according to the judgment of the Conferences of Bishops. Crosses remain veiled until the end of the celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday; images remain veiled until the beginning of the Easter Vigil.”¹

2. Have the Bishops of the United States expressed the judgment on this practice?

Yes. On June 14, 2001, the Latin Church members of the USCCB approved an adaptation to number 318 of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* which would allow for the veiling of crosses and images in this manner. On April 17, 2002, Cardinal Jorge Medina Estevez, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments wrote to Bishop Wilton D. Gregory, USCCB President (Prot. no. 1381/01/L), noting that this matter belonged more properly to the rubrics of the Fifth Sunday of Lent. While the decision of the USCCB will be included with this rubric when the *Roman Missal* is eventually published, the veiling of crosses and images may now take place at the discretion of the local pastor.

3. When may crosses and images be veiled?

Crosses and images may be veiled on the Fifth Sunday of Lent. Crosses are unveiled following the Good Friday Liturgy, while images are unveiled before the beginning of the Easter Vigil.

3. Is the veiling of crosses and statues required?

No. The veiling is offered as an option, at the discretion of the local pastor.

3. What is the reason for the veiling of crosses and images?

The veiling of crosses and images is a sort of “fasting” from sacred depictions which represent the paschal glory of our salvation. Just as the Lenten fast concludes with the Paschal feast, so too, our fasting from the cross culminates in an adoration of the holy wood on which the sacrifice of Calvary was offered for our sins. Likewise, a fasting from the glorious images of the mysteries of faith and the saints in glory, culminates on the Easter night with a renewed appreciation of the glorious victory won by Christ, risen from the tomb to win for us eternal life.

4. Why are crosses unveiled after the Good Friday Liturgy?

An important part of the Good Friday Liturgy is the veneration of the cross, which may include its unveiling. Once the cross to be venerated has been unveiled, it seems logical that all crosses would remain unveiled for the veneration of the faithful.

5. What do the veils look like?

While liturgical law does not prescribe the form or color of such veils, they have traditionally been made of simple, lightweight purple cloth, without ornament.

6. Is it permissible to veil the crosses after the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday?

Yes. The concluding rubrics which follow the text for the Mass of the Lord's Supper (no. 41) indicate that “at an opportune time the altar is stripped and, if it is possible, crosses are removed from the church. It is fitting that crosses which remain in the Church be veiled.”²

¹ This is an unofficial translation by the Secretariat for the Liturgy.

² Cf. *Paschale Solemnitas*, 1988 Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, no. 57.