
CELEBRATING THE PASSOVER SEDER

There has been a question about the practice of celebrating a seder meal, a sacred memorial of the Jews, in Catholic parishes and schools. This is commendable so long as the following guidelines provided by the USCCB are followed.

God's Mercy Endures Forever: Guidelines on the Presentation of Jews and Judaism in Catholic Preaching

Bishop's Committee on the Liturgy,
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
September, 1988

Pastoral Activity during Holy Week and the Easter Season

27. Pope John Paul II's visit to the Chief Rabbi of Rome on Good Friday, 1987, gives a lead for pastoral activities during Holy Week in local churches. Some dioceses and parishes, for example, have begun traditions such as holding a "Service of Reconciliation" with Jews on Palm Sunday, or inviting Holocaust survivors to address their congregations during Lent.

28. It is becoming familiar in many parishes and Catholic homes to participate in a Passover Seder during Holy Week. This practice can have educational and spiritual value. It is wrong, however, to "baptize" the Seder by ending it with New Testament readings about the Last Supper or, worse, turn it into a prologue to the Eucharist. Such mergings distort both traditions. The following advice should prove useful:

When Christians celebrate this sacred feast among themselves, the rites of the *haggadah* for the seder should be respected in all their integrity. The seder . . . should be celebrated in a dignified manner and with sensitivity to those to whom the seder truly belongs. The primary reason why Christians may celebrate the festival of Passover should be to acknowledge common roots in the history of salvation. Any sense of "restaging" the Last Supper of the Lord Jesus should be avoided The rites of the Triduum are the [Church's] annual memorial of the events of Jesus' dying and rising (*Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy Newsletter, March 1980, p. 12*).

This office would recommend to groups and parishes those editions of the *haggadah* which are true to the tradition of Israel and the meaning of the festival of Passover. One such edition has been edited by Rabbi Leon Klenicki, with an introduction by Gabe Huck, *The Passover Celebration*, by Liturgy Training Publication, Chicago, IL . ISBN: 1-56854-389-1.