

Celebrating

Flags in our Worship Space

(continued)

The article reads as follows:

"Many churches display the papal and national flags. This optional custom began fairly recently in church history. During periods of national crisis, it became popular to post a country's flag inside its churches. The practice showed another layer of unanimity within the assembly of believers, signified the country's prayers for security and peace and tapped the emotional relationship between national pride and religious belief. When the periods of crisis waned, the flags remained. It probably seemed unpatriotic to remove them.

The papal flag commonly took up a position next to the national flag. It carries the pope's coat of arms, a triple tiara and crossed keys, symbolizing his ministry as ruler and successor to Peter, the apostle to whom Jesus entrusted the keys to the kingdom of heaven, and who, tradition holds, first served as bishop of the church at Rome. The tiara and keys are depicted in the noble colors of silver and gold.

The two flags often adorned a church's sanctuary. However, since the Second Vatican Council's appeal for simplicity in the liturgy, the sanctuary has become more reserved for those features necessary for the celebration of Mass. The removal of flags from the sanctuary does not promote disloyalty to church or state, but may assist the prayer of those gathered for the Eucharist by keeping their attention fixed on its central symbols: the altar, ambo and chair, as well as the bread and wine.

*At funerals, a national flag may be placed on a coffin before it arrives at the church and after it leaves (**Order of Christian Funerals 132**). During the funeral, a coffin is covered with a white pall, symbolizing the baptismal garment."*

Words of Remembrance (Eulogies) at Funeral Liturgies

Regarding Words of Remembrance at the Funeral Liturgy (eulogies), the diocesan policy from the Office for Pastoral Liturgy states that it is the ministry of the homilist to speak the words that attempt to comfort and console, give compassion and hope. Attentive to the grief of those present, the homilist should dwell on God's compassionate love and on the paschal mystery of the Lord, as proclaimed in the Scripture readings. The homilist should also help the members of the assembly to understand the mystery of God's love and the mystery of Jesus' victorious death and resurrection were present in the life and death of the deceased and that these mysteries are active in their own lives as well. Through the homily members of the family and community should receive consolation and strength to face the death of one of their members with a hope nourished by the saving word of God (OCF, 27).

Concrete reminiscences, personal stories within the context of faith do much to bring about healing and consolation. Such expressions help to bring the gathered faithful a more complete knowledge of the one who has died. The Vigil (Wake), with its more intimate and solemn setting, is the most appropriate place for family members and friends to engage in this sharing of consoling memories (OCF, 52, 64, 80).

A complete copy of the Diocesan Policy regarding flags and words of remembrance are available by calling Darlene Bednarz.

