

St. John's Newsletter



Why are statues covered at Lent?

During the last two weeks of Lent the statues, crucifixes and art in the church are intentionally covered with purple cloth. It is not just a strange practice, but is deeply rooted in our Lenten devotion to prepare ourselves for the coming Easter Triduum and glorious Resurrection of our Lord. This time of Lent is called *Passiontide* which begins on the Fifth Sunday of Lent. This is when the Church shifts her focus from Christ in the desert (the Gospel for the First Sunday of Lent) to Christ during His Passion. During this period of Passiontide, the crucifix and other statues and images around the church are veiled.

The practice of veiling images tells us that something is different. The veils are hard to miss and they serve as a reminder to get ready. It reminds us that focusing on the world around us can hide

our true path to salvation through Jesus. Christ lifts the veil through His Resurrection. Through this absence of images, our senses are heightened and we become more aware of what is missing.

The Roman Missal says, *"In the Dioceses of the United States, the practice of covering crosses and images throughout the church from [the fifth] Sunday [of Lent] may be observed. Crosses remain covered until the end of the Celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday, but images remain covered until the beginning of the Easter Vigil."*

The Catholic Church recommends this practice to heighten our senses and build within us a longing and anticipation for Easter Sunday. It is a tradition that should not only be carried out in our local parish, but can also be a helpful activity for the domestic church (our homes) to remind our families at home. Seeing it daily rather than just weekly at Mass can be a powerful part of our Lent. Families are encouraged to imitate this practice and veil prominent religious images in their homes. It helps us to participate in the liturgical season.

This is the current practice of the Church, but veiling from the Fifth Sunday of Lent is small compared to what was once practiced. Historically, sometimes images were veiled for the whole of Lent and in Germany there was a tradition to veil the entire altar from view throughout all of Lent. Then at Easter the altar is revealed as the Temple veil was torn in two at the time of Christ's death on the Cross.

The veils can also focus our attention on the words being said at Mass. When we listen to the Passion narrative, our senses are allowed to focus on the striking words from the Gospel. The veils are not meant to be there forever. When the images are unveiled, they are revealed in their full beauty at the Easter Vigil – just as God's Glory and Mercy are revealed with the Resurrection of our Lord.



Sources:

https://prayer.catholicshare.com/catholics-cover-crucifixes-statues-lent/?utm_source=Pinterest&utm_medium=organic
<https://www.sis.edu/news/why-do-we-cover-statues-and-images-with-a-veil-during-lent>

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