

The Liturgy Magazine for the Whole Parish
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Rite

**May Choirs of Angels
Welcome You**

**The Vigil:
Making Room for God**

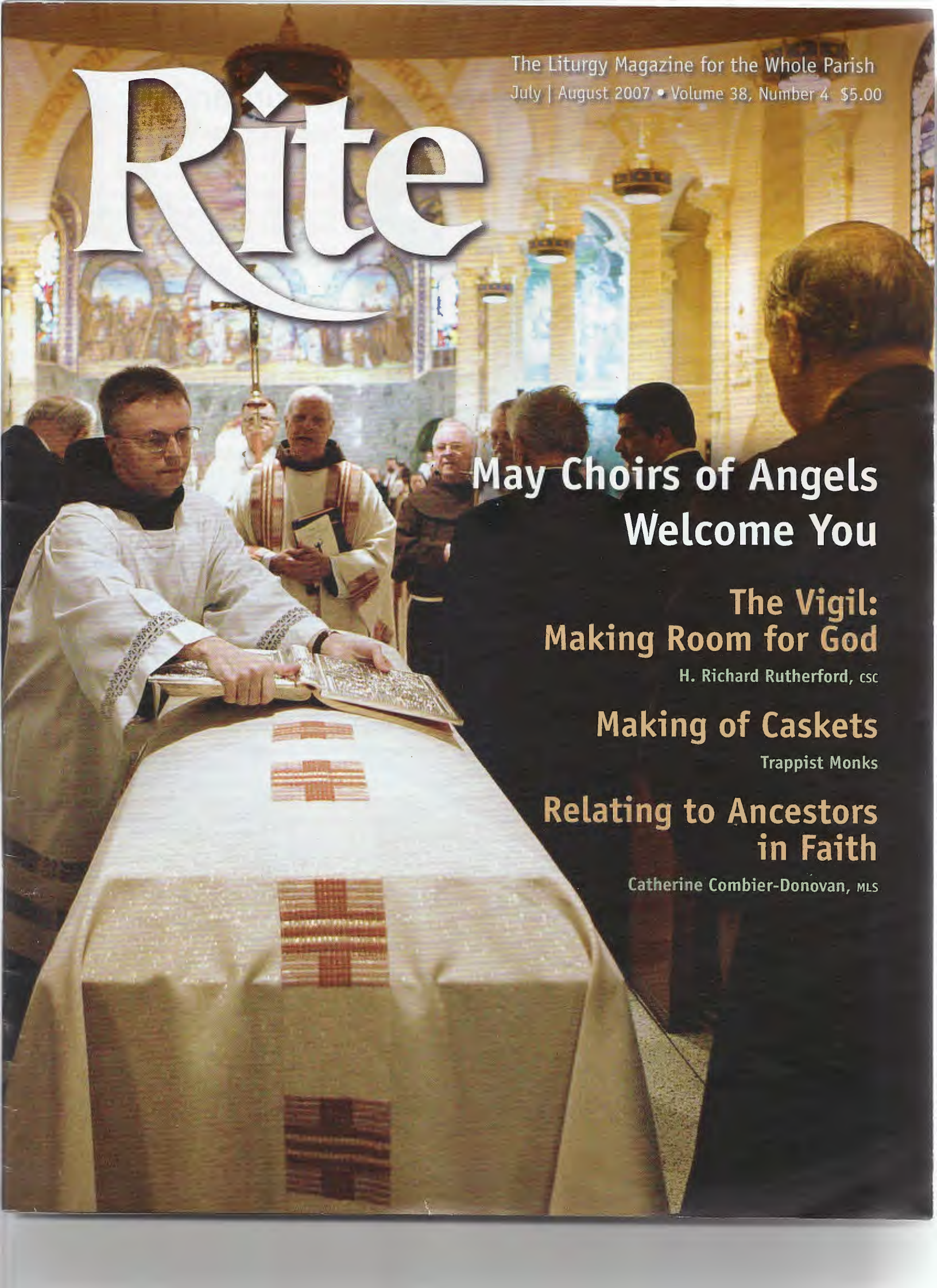
H. Richard Rutherford, CSC

Making of Caskets

Trappist Monks

**Relating to Ancestors
in Faith**

Catherine Combier-Donovan, MLS



Honoring the Dead

Jill Maria Murdy



The Paschal candle is placed near the coffin.

FUNERALS

Changes in the environment for funeral liturgies must be simple and made quickly and efficiently. The first and most obvious change would be the placement of the Paschal candle near the coffin. As *Built of Living Stones* (BLS) states:

The paschal candle is the symbol of “the light of Christ, rising in glory,” scattering “the darkness of our hearts and minds.” . . . During funerals the paschal candle is placed near the coffin as a sign of the Christian’s passover from death to life (#94).

Examine the church for any changes that need to be made concerning liturgical colors. It would be appropriate for any colored cloths on the ambo or credence table to be replaced with white cloth. In some places, where visitation occurs within the church, flowers already may be present in the church and remain for services. Where visitation takes place in the narthex, often only a few of the flowers and bouquets are brought into the church proper.

Some churches have policies on whether flowers may remain in the church after the funeral. Often it is dependent on their suitability to the seasonal decor. Artifacts pertaining to the interests and hobbies of the deceased should be removed from the floral arrangements, as should ribbons denoting relationships, such as “Grandmother” or “Dad.”

Families may need to be apprised of the more austere look that is part of the Lenten environment. According to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal 2002, (#305) flowers may not be on the altar during Lent.

The issue of the placement of flowers during Lent can be handled pastorally by explaining the guidelines to area florists. It could be suggested that flowers and plants be placed in the narthex.

If the visitation is in the church, picture boards depicting the individual’s life should be set aside. Such items could interfere with ritual actions or obstruct the view of the altar and ambo.

A family may need to understand that bread and wine are the gifts brought up at the Presentation of the Gifts. It is inappropriate to present artifacts representing the life of the deceased.

SOLEMNITY OF ALL SAINTS

The solemnity of All Saints is a day to celebrate the saints in our songs, prayers, and images.

If your church has access to icons, statues, or images of the saints, bring them out. Create an environment with pictures,

images, and relics. You could leave this up for the entire month or for the day, depending on your situation. An area for displaying the images could be arranged with different-sized blocks and easels, vigil lights, and white and gold cloths. If a suitable area is not available in the church proper, there could be a seasonal display in the narthex. Another option would be to feature pictures of the saints drawn by parish school children.

COMMEMORATION OF ALL THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

Besides a morning Mass on the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls Day), my parish has an evening service in which we remember and celebrate all who have died in the past year. We send out letters to families in advance and publicize it in the church bulletin.

Parishioners are encouraged to bring a picture or small keepsake to place in a display in the sanctuary or narthex. (We encourage people to take the mementoes home after the service, so they are not lost.) As the name of the deceased is read, a family member comes forward to light a vigil candle from the Paschal

candle in their loved one's honor. If there is no family member present, a member of our bereavement group lights the candle. A small bell could be rung after each name is called.

The seven-day red vigil candles are placed alongside the baptismal font. That weekend the candles are a reminder to the assembly of all who have gone before us.

Place the Book of the Names of the Dead in the church proper or the narthex, so that parishioners may enter names throughout November. Candles around the book, or a brocade cloth under the book, may set it apart. (By purchasing cloth from the sale bins in fabric stores, you may have cloth on hand for such use. Store the fabric in plastic bins or drawers divided by color.)

You may wish to incorporate the Book of the Names of the Dead into your liturgies by referring to it in the Prayer of the Faithful or reading off a page of names from the book each day at Mass or the Liturgy of the Hours. Parishes with a mix of ethnicities may want to include religious traditions from other cultures with the month's observances. *Dia de los Muertos* is a three-day celebration of the dead. The tradition of creating an altar for the dead within each home could be transferred to a seasonal space within the church or narthex.

In my parish, the Latinos are the newest members and are proud to share their traditions and spirituality. Such sharing provides a way to create cross-cultural bonds. Should *Dia de los Muertos* become part of the observances in your parish, you may want to find a way for the Day of the Dead bread and sugar skeleton skulls to be shared. Parishioners may enjoy seeing the sugar skeletons that are part of the celebration and tasting the day of the dead bread. Explore with the parish other ethnic customs that are part of the communities' heritage and how they can be integrated into the life of the parish during November.

Take care to consider which ways to observe the month will work for your parish. Brainstorming with a committee may bring about more ideas. But do not feel that you need to do everything. In this article, I have discussed varied displays and memorials for November. How a parish incorporates ideas depends on the church's architecture, the traditions of the parish, the makeup of the parishioners, and the needs of worshippers. These ideas may spark others that will aid your community in paying homage to and praying for those who have gone before us. **R**

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Photo by Karen Callaway

Photos of family members in the church remember the dead.