**HOLY WEEK: PALM SUNDAY AND THE TRIDUUM**

**OPENING PRAYER**

Loving God, in this sacred time of Holy Week, we open our hearts to your presence and walk with Jesus through his trials and ultimate sacrifice. Help us approach the journey with trust in the hope and love that sustained him. Guide us to see your light in darkness and struggle, and your boundless love in every moment. Inspire us to carry this love into the world through acts of compassion, drawing us closer to you and to the truth that love always prevails. Amen

**HOLY WEEK**

Holy Week is a time that is set apart in our Church’s liturgical year for us to focus on how we are spiritually renewed through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The liturgies of Holy Week are filled with some of the richest and most ancient symbols of the Catholic faith. The waving of palms on Passion (Palm) Sunday reminds us that we are called to be followers of Jesus. The washing of feet on Holy Thursday speaks to us of the selfless love that we are called to practice in imitation of Jesus. The veneration of the cross on Good Friday reminds us that, as Christians, we believe that Jesus can overcome anything, even death. The lighting of the Easter fire in a darkened church and the celebration of baptisms on Holy Saturday speak to us of the new life that is ours because of Jesus’ triumph over the darkness of sin and death through his resurrection. For us Catholic Christians, the passion, death, and resurrection of the Lord are not events that happened in the distant past; they are real in this moment, active in our own lives. We experience this mystery as we relate to one another and to God.

**Make Space to Renew Your Faith**

This Holy Week allow yourself time apart, holy time, to spend with Jesus. May it be a time set apart to unclutter your mind, lay down your burdens, and renew your faith in Jesus.

Come to the liturgies of Holy Week. Take steps to indicate that this is not life as usual, but a special time set apart. Do that through what you eat, what you do in the evenings, what you talk about, and what you do upon waking and going to sleep. For example, you might set aside an evening to read the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ Passion and Death or pray the Stations of the Cross with your family.

**Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion**

Palm Sunday celebrates two seemingly contrasting realities, as even the name suggests. The liturgy begins with exultant praise and acclamation: “Hosanna to the Son of David!” (Matt. 21:9). The tone quickly changes, however, with shouts of “Crucify him!” But there is only one story: the story of the paschal mystery. Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection are intimately connected, so much so that we cannot compartmentalize any aspect.

Perhaps the most memorable part of the Palm Sunday liturgy is the commemoration of the Lord’s entrance into Jerusalem with the blessing and distribution of palm branches. We read in the Gospel of Matthew that the crowds in Jerusalem “spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road” (21:8). When we hold our palm branches today, we also acclaim Christ the King, and we come not as individuals but as a community. We pray in a special way that as we begin our journey through Holy Week, we may more closely align our lives with the God who loves us.

**Take some time this week** to listen to the song “Jesus the Lord” by Jesuit Father Roc O’Connor, available on YouTube, Spotify, or other streaming services. Based on the Canticle of the Philippians from today’s second reading, this song invites us to unite ourselves with the One in whom we live and move and have our being.

**THE TRIDUUM**

The Triduum is the time of the church year when we celebrate the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The sacred paschal triduum begins with the evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday continues Good Friday with the Liturgy of the Lord’s Passion. At the end of this liturgy, we leave the church in silence, waiting to celebrate the glory of our Lord’s resurrection. Then, on Saturday, the Church re-gathers to celebrate the final, and most grand moment of the Triduum: the Resurrection of our Lord. The Triduum formally ends with evening prayer on Easter Sunday. The word triduum comes from the Latin for “three days.” These three days of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil/Easter Sunday are the peak of our liturgical year and rich with symbolism and ritual.

**Holy Thursday: Mass of the Lord’s Supper**

Holy Thursday commemorates, in a special way, Jesus’ command to humbly serve others, an essential element of our Christian faith. We read in the Gospel of John (13:4–5) that Jesus gets up from the table, takes off his outer robe, and ties a towel around himself. Then he pours water into a basin and begins washing the disciples’ feet.

The washing of feet is more than a literal foot washing. If we limit ourselves to literal foot washing, we miss the reality of Jesus’ request: “Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). Jesus tells us to follow his example of welcoming the stranger, eating with the outcast, and caring for the sick, among so many other concrete actions. This is a command, not a suggestion.

At the conclusion of the Holy Thursday celebration, there is a Eucharistic Procession to the Chapel of Reservation which reminds us of Jesus’ time in the garden of Gethsemane when he prayed so fervently through the night. The entire community is invited to wait with Jesus in silent prayer and adoration. The gathered community leaves in silence only to return in prayer the next day for the Good Friday celebration.

**Take some time to ponder these questions**:

How do you serve others in your family and community? How do you connect this service to Jesus’ command? Who are those people who most need your help? What does the sacrament of the Eucharist mean to you?

**Good Friday: Liturgy of the Lord’s Passion**

In this solemn celebration, we remember the Passion and Death of Our Lord. The liturgy is marked by several important rituals, including the proclamation of the Gospel of John’s account of the suffering and death of Jesus, the Veneration of the Cross, an extended form of General Intercessions, and finally, the distribution of Communion (reserved from the Holy Thursday celebration of the Eucharist).

The Veneration of the Cross reminds us that through this Cross, the glory of the resurrection emerges. The paschal mystery invites us to contemplate and live these realities anew today. One need not look far to see pervasive examples of suffering and death in our families, churches, communities, and world. We know, however, that death never wins. Life is always victorious. This is the essence of the paschal mystery and our Christian identity in Christ.

The Good Friday solemn intercessions contain specific prayers for the Holy Catholic Church, for the pope, for all orders and degrees of the faithful, for catechumens, for unity of Christians, for the Jewish people, for those who do not believe in Christ, for those who do not believe in God, for those in public office, and for those in tribulation. These prayers recognize how universal our Church is and that we should be aware of all the faiths and traditions in the world that are different from our own

**Take time to ponder these questions:**

What does the death of Jesus mean to you? What does it mean to you to “Glory in the Cross”?

**Holy Saturday: the Easter Vigil**

The celebration of the Easter Vigil tells the whole story of our salvation — from creation to resurrection and beyond. We proclaim that the light of Christ banishes all darkness. We sing the Exsultet (Proclamation of Easter), we hear the stories of our ancestors in faith from both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. We welcome new members into our Christian community through the sacraments of initiation. We celebrate the Eucharist. All these rituals come together for one purpose: to remember and recall the saving deeds of our God on our behalf.

Here’s an explanation of two moments from the celebration.

**The Exsultet**,

The Exsultet or the Easter Proclamation, is a hymn that speaks of how God has interceded in our lives on our behalf. It especially recalls the Holy Night when Jesus Christ rose from the dead. What makes this moment particularly dramatic is that the Exsultet is sung in a church lit only with the light of the Paschal Candle and other smaller candles, which the people gathered there are holding.

**The Liturgy of the Word**
The Liturgy of the Word for the Easter Vigil is comprised of nine readings and seven responsorial psalms. The first reading begins with the story of Creation and then, each subsequent reading recounts the story of our faith lives through history. You’ll hear the story of Issac and Abraham, the story of Moses and the Exodus, and more. They lead up to the singing of the Gloria when all the lights come on in the church, and then the final reading, the Resurrection of Christ, is proclaimed. These readings recount the many ways in which God has interceded on our behalf throughout history.

**Take some holy water home with you**. Bring a small container with you so that you can bring some holy water home. Place the water near your door so you can sign yourself when you enter and exit your home. This water is a reminder of the baptismal promises we renew at Easter and of our Christian responsibility to live in such a way that others may encounter the risen Christ through us.

**Take some time today to ponder these questions**. How has God interceded in my life?
After hearing the Resurrection story, what events do I see in my own life that need new life, in need of resurrection? How can I carry on the story of the resurrection to others?