

# From the desk of Fr. Tim

## Holy Week

The center of our faith is the Death and Resurrection of Jesus. There are many teachings and practices in our religion that we may find very helpful in our journey through life. For example, the many forms of prayer have the benefit of helping us to focus and gain confidence. We may conclude that the most important thing we can know is a particular teaching of the Church, or a particular pattern or form of spirituality. In truth, the center of our faith is an event, a point in time, a moment in history. Upon one moment within the one who is Truth, a heart stopped beating. A spirit was yielded up. A point in time passed. There was a difference between what was before and what was after. It will be the same for us. Holy Week is for us a point in our time.

The many ways that we have attempted to remember the details of Jesus' Passion still pale in comparison to the liturgy. We may glance at the drawings of the Stations of the Cross as we visit the church, but that is no comparison to participating in the liturgy as we share the experience in our prayers. Holy Week becomes the focus of the Catholic Church throughout the world. We walk with Jesus as he moves toward Calvary. Our intention is to embrace the event of our redemption; to make his time our time.

Holy Week begins on Palm Sunday and because it is a Sunday, it is more familiar. It joyfully celebrates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. This was at the beginning of the preparation week before Passover, and Jesus was hailed as the King of the Jews. His royal dignity was mistaken as having an earthly origin. His Kingdom is Heaven. As a commemoration of his entry at all the Masses, we will gather in the courtyard and enter the Church together, following the blessing of the palms.

**Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week** are somewhat ordinary in the scheme of things, but they are used to prepare for the last three days, called **The Triduum** ("three days"). In our Diocese on Tuesday, a capacity crowd gathers at the Cathedral at 7:00 pm for what is called the **Chrism Mass**, when the Bishop blesses the Holy Oils used for Holy Anointing of the Sick, Baptism and Confirmation. The priests of the Diocese also renew their vows on this day. Typically, those adults and family members who are preparing for Baptism and Confirmation gather at the Cathedral from the many parishes of our Diocese.

**The Holy Thursday Mass (7:00 pm)** recalls the event of the Institution of the Mass. As he gathers his disciples to keep the Passover meal, he establishes a new form of worship among God's People. We are commanded to do the Mass as the way to make him present in the midst of the gathered community of faith. There are actually two commandments given this night, the other is the commandment to love one another in the unique manner that he shows us by washing his disciple's feet. Members of the parish have their feet washed as a sign that this is the character of our life together, that of loving service to one another. It is not an accident that this is intimately joined with the gift of the Mass, where we receive the very Body and Blood of Jesus. The Mass ends by reposing the Blessed Sacrament at the altar in the chapel.

**Gethsemane Vigil** To recall the agony of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, the parish is invited to keep a vigil of one hour throughout the night and on Good Friday. Jesus asked his disciples if they could not watch one hour in prayer as he prepared to offer himself for the sins of all humanity. Please sign up for an hour on the schedule in the narthex. The vigil ends at the beginning of the Good Friday Liturgy at 7:00 pm.

**The Good Friday Liturgy (7:00 pm)** focuses our attention on the Cross. We gather for prayers and scripture readings, and to show our appreciation for Jesus' sufferings. Once again, the fact of Jesus' death is not merely an intellectual truth that gives us confidence before the judgment throne of God. His willingness to endure

unimaginable suffering is the reason for our love of God. His love for us, shown us from the Cross, is our salvation. One of the most moving ceremonies is the Veneration of the Cross. The faithful approach and kiss the cross, or in some other way show personal reverence for the instrument used by God to save us. The liturgy of Good Friday ends with communion from the Reserved Sacrament.

**The Vigil (Holy Saturday) (8:15 pm)** This night is the commemoration of our salvation, our adoption as God's children. The liturgy begins thirty minutes after sundown to ensure that we begin in darkness, lighting the Paschal Candle and recalling that "Christ is our Light." He enlightens our mind with the hope of salvation. All the people light small candles from the large "Easter Candle," and the Church that once stood in darkness now stands in the Light of Christ. The service then turns to the contemplation of all the key events in the Old Testament that prepared for the coming of Christ. The Gospel of the Resurrection is read, and those who have been preparing for many months are Baptized and Confirmed. We celebrate the "First Mass of Easter" with great joy. The dreary days of Lent have ended, and, though we are unworthy, by the command of Christ, we celebrate the new life of grace, the new life of Christ's love for us and one another.

*In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another.*

**(1 John 4:9-11)**