

# LENT NEWSLETTER

## *PREPARE FOR HOLY WEEK*



### **PREPARE WELL FOR HOLY WEEK**

When you are planning for a memorable family celebration, such as the golden jubilee of your parents' marriage, you do some planning and you bring forth a lot of creative energy. Good times as a family do not just happen. They take effort and cooperation.

The life of the Church is the same. It is never good enough just to read the right prayers and sing the right hymns. Everyone must bring their creative energy and jump right into the mystery

of the suffering, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We are not retelling the story from long ago in a rather violent city called Jerusalem. This is very much our living experience of the great mystery of salvation lived and participated in right now. We will tell the story once again this year so that each one of us can be plunged deeper into the mystery of God's mercy and love for all humanity.

This is not for the faint of heart or for the spiritually lazy. This is joining Jesus Christ full force.

### **HOW TO USE THIS BULLETIN**

This bulletin has been structured according to the key celebrations of Holy Week. It is impossible to try to capture the full impact that Holy Week can and should make on the parish community.

Each day does not make sense of its own. It must be joined to the entire week. Every year we will receive new insights and new openings into the mystery of Christ unfolding right among us.

Always try to prepare the readings at home. Become familiar with the texts. Pray over them and come hungry to the Holy Week liturgies in order that you may be nourished and sustained by the central event of our salvation.

Do not expect that you can exhaust the meaning of our Holy Week.

When we come to the end of the Holy Week you should be tired. We have prayed, sung, shared and been nourished that we just want to go home and rest. And just like a good family celebration fatigue is a healthy sign that 'we did it right.'

# Palm Sunday

**Pray the Second reading for Palm Sunday. This is a tight summary of the meaning of our Holy Week.**

We believe that Jesus Christ,  
who was in the form of God  
did not regard  
equality with God  
as something to be  
exploited.

We believe that he emptied  
himself,  
taking the form of a  
slave,  
being born in human  
likeness,  
and being found in  
human form  
he humbled himself  
and became obedient  
to the  
point of death --  
even death on a  
cross.

We believe that God has  
highly exalted him  
and gave him the  
name  
that is above every  
name  
so that every knee  
should bend,  
in heaven and on  
earth  
and under the earth,  
and every tongue  
should confess  
that Jesus Christ is  
Lord  
to the glory of God  
the Father.

Palm Sunday captures our imagination. Our children feel good about holding and waving the palm branches. They are blessed and we take them home to attach into our crucifixes. The dried palm branches roots us in the suffering and death of Jesus.

As we begin this Holy Week it is important to see that Palm Sunday is a special walk with Jesus. If we can have a procession into our parish church we will have a small sense of walking beside Jesus.

But listen intently with your heart and soul. During the liturgies there will be a great deal of the Scriptures read and shared but it will be our own engagement with the Scriptures that will make this walk worthwhile.

During Holy Week try to get your finger on the pulse of Jesus. What moved his heart to endure such violence for the sake of the love of God. Have your finger on his pulse in his love for all humanity.

Think of almost any item on the evening news of violence somewhere in our world. May you be sensitive to the feelings of

Jesus toward those who suffer the violence and those who wreck this violence on others.

Walk with Jesus who emptied himself out of love for the healing and forgiveness of the world. Never be naive and not consider how much this much have cost Jesus, the human being who was violently killed.

Walk with Jesus who was abandoned by all his friends and disciples. The crucifixion was the most shameful way that the Roman conquerors could shame the people into submission. The moment when Jesus most needed the support of others, he was left all alone on the cross. Be with Jesus in the aloneness.

As we once again repeat the story of Jesus bring all the people you know who have been shamed, dropped or rejected by others. Bring all who have suffered violence at the hands of others.





Holy Thursday is the first of the tridium. This title is from the Latin language which literally means the three days. The entire thrust of Holy Thursday is to share in and unpack the meaning of the Last Supper.

The Last Supper did not happen in a vacuum. Jesus, as a faithful and practicing Jew, brought together his disciples to celebrate the feast of Passover. This is when the devout would retell the story of the deliverance by God of the Hebrew slaves from Egypt. They would share in the bitter herbs, eat the unleaven bread and drink the four cups of wine. This was always a family celebration but the people were not retelling the great act of deliverance from slavery. They felt that they were actually participating in this powerful act of deliverance and freedom.

Jesus now takes the Passover story (i.e, from slavery in Egypt) and gives it new meaning and direction. The new Passover is in his supreme sacrifice of his life, given for all humanity, on the cross the next day. The cup of blessing which he would share with his disciples around the meal would be his blood poured out in love for a sinful humanity.

# HOLY THURSDAY

The breaking and the sharing of the unleaven bread is a true sharing in the very sacrifice (i.e, the self-giving) of Christ for humanity.

But immediately people notice that the Gospel reading on Holy Thursday is not about the bread and wine. We read from the Gospel of John (Jn. 13, 1-15) which does not have any account of the bread and wine. It speaks only about the washing of the feet. This is very deliberate in the Gospel of John and in the liturgy of this feast day.

The washing of the feet spells out what it means to share in the Eucharist. No one can take part of the mission of Jesus without being a person of service and compassion. Simply put, there can be no breaking of the bread in our Sunday Eucharists if there is not a breaking and sharing of our lives. What we do in our Sunday liturgies must be lived out in our daily lives and in our families.

Our lives must be a living and sharing of our heart and our life for others.

Take a few moments before continuing to reflect how you are sharing your life like the bread of Jesus for the poor? The forgotten and the misplaced of this world?

*A poem to sit with on Holy Thursday - taken from Mother Teresa of Calcutta.*

*"At Mass  
Christ  
is hidden  
in bread.*

*on the  
street*

*He hides  
in the  
neighbor*

*helpless  
alone  
afraid.*

*He is all  
around us*

*We must  
attend Him"  
she says*



Begin your Good Friday with Prayer before the Cross . In your heart and imagination stand with Mary before the cross.

*Lord Jesus, Redeemer of all,  
hear my prayer.  
For the love you bear  
to those who ask forgiveness,  
look mercifully on me,  
as once you looked on Mary Magdalene  
and on Peter who denied you.*

*Look on me, Lord Jesus Christ,  
as you looked on the thief on his cross  
and on every sinner  
whom you have ever forgiven.*

*Look on me, merciful Lord,  
as you looked on your mother, Mary,  
standing in sorrow beneath your cross.  
Let me feel in my heart her compassion  
for you,  
and let my eyes weep for the sorrows  
my sins have caused.*

*Call me from darkness  
to my Father's house,  
give me a new heart  
and a place at your side  
at the banquet of your kingdom.*

# Good Friday

## THE WOOD: THE TREE OF LIFE

Good Friday is so heavy and so rich. It is like eating a huge meal and knowing there is still more to eat. You just cannot absorb all there is to take in at one sitting.

This year we want to focus only on the wood of the cross. The instructions are very clear: the cross for the Good Friday liturgy must be a wooden cross.

What is happening here is a play on images. You need to have the heart of a poet to understand. There is good and evil, life and death, redemption and sin being played out all at once at the wood of the cross.

It was from the tree (i.e., wood!) that man and woman rejected God. They wanted to be their own gods, and do their own thing, that they went contrary to the directions of God. Every time a human being chooses evil and decides not to follow the way laid out by God, the sin of Adam and Eve happens all over again.

The wood of the tree is disobedience, sin and willful human pride.

Now, the cross of Jesus (also the wood) is the great tree of salvation. It is in the sacrifice of Jesus, his full cooperation with the plan of God, that all humanity is brought to God. The tree is the source of life and forgiveness. The tree is the outpouring of God's love for all peoples: the strong, the weak and the downright miserable! No one is excluded from the love and the mercy of God.

During the liturgy of Good Friday you will be invited to exhibit a veneration for the wood of the cross. May your heart and your will touch the very heart and life of God, outpoured for us. May the touch of your hand on the wood of the cross be the gift of your life with Jesus to God the Father love,