

Palm Sunday and Holy Week

This week, the most sacred time of the Church's year begins with Palm Sunday and culminates in the Triduum ("three days") of the Lord's Passion and Resurrection. While this is a Holy Week unlike any we have ever experienced, these mysteries have not been lost or changed. In fact, they may reveal depths of meaning that we might otherwise miss in more routine times.

This past Palm Sunday, we began by commemorating the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem six days before His Passion and Death, retold in Matthew's powerful and rich account. *Consider: the palms of one year become the ashes for future Ash Wednesdays. How have my hopes and my dedication to the Gospel become dry and barren, like the ashes? How has my faith in God been shaken, as Jesus predicted for the Apostles? How can I be like the women who sat waiting by the Tomb for a hope that they could not fully explain?*

We move through the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper on Holy Thursday, with the reminder that we are called to serve one another in imitation of Christ, Who came not to be served but to serve, Who washed His disciples' feet as a gesture of that humble service, and gave the Church the gift of the priesthood. *Consider: how have I been of humble service to another this week, this month, this year? How has another served me? What have those experiences taught me? Pray this evening especially for priestly vocations and for our seminarians.*

We experience the profound sorrow and awe of Good Friday and the death of our Lord, the only day in the Church's year in which Mass is not celebrated because we remember what it is like to know that our great High Priest has died. On this day, the entire Church experiences what we have known these past few weeks ... to fast from the Eucharist. *Consider: how can I unite my Eucharistic fast with those in our world who go for long periods without this Gift due to oppression, persecution, war, lack of clergy, or their own life circumstances? How can I be aware of and comfort the suffering of another, as Jesus consoled the women of Jerusalem and the Good Thief in the midst of His own pain? Pray from a grateful and awe-filled heart: "We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You, for by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world."*

We wait with Mary and the Apostles by the tomb, and celebrate the victory of Jesus over the power of sin and death on Easter. *Consider: what does new life mean to me today? What is my own Easter hope?*

I encourage you to pray often and in silence in these days, to spend time remembering and thanking Jesus for His sacrifice that continues to bring us life, peace, mercy, and hope. Gaze upon a Crucifix. Find a picture of the Shroud of Turin. Let the stillness imposed by these days bear fruit. Know more deeply what the Apostles felt when Christ was gone from their midst, and the overwhelming joy of knowing He is alive.

In the Passion narrative in the Gospels, Jesus tells His disciples: *"The Teacher says, 'My appointed time draws near; in your house I shall celebrate the Passover.'"* Across the ages of the Church, this remains true: Christ wishes to celebrate His passage from death to life in our lives, within us. This year, as we cannot gather for the Holy Week liturgies as usual, those words take on an ever deeper promise ... *"in your house I celebrate My Passover."* As those who share the Lord's Passion in faith, we too pray: ***"Jesus, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom."***

Live-Streamed Liturgies for Our Cluster

Holy Thursday: 5:00 p.m.

“Keep watch with Me,” Jesus asked Peter, James, and John. Watching with the Lord in the Garden is the Scriptural origin of the Holy Hour; spend an hour in silent prayer at home this evening.

Good Friday: 12 noon

A key element of this liturgy is the Adoration of the Holy Cross. We will pause the liturgy for five minutes at that point to allow you to venerate a Cross in your home and observe a time of silent prayer.

Easter Sunday: 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.

Note that we will not offer a livestreamed Easter vigil on Holy Saturday for two reasons: first, it allows all to share in the livestreamed diocesan Vigil celebrated by Bishop Kettler at St. Mary’s Cathedral; and second, the two individuals receiving Easter sacraments are only available on Sunday.

At the 8:30 a.m. Mass, we will celebrate Baptism for Nathaniel Shipley, reception into full communion with the Catholic Church for Andrea Hostetter, and Confirmation and First Communion for both. The Easter candles for all three cluster parishes will also be blessed at this time.

Diocesan livestreamed liturgies of Holy Week celebrated by Bishop Kettler can be viewed via the diocesan website: <http://stcdio.org/liturgies/>:

Holy Thursday (April 9), 7:00 p.m.

Good Friday (April 10), 12:05 p.m.

Easter Vigil (April 11), 8:00 p.m.

Easter (April 12), 9:45 a.m.

A Prayer In Time of Pandemic

The Vatican recently approved a new Mass for Various Needs and Occasions for the Roman Missal, entitled “In Time of Pandemic.” With Holy Week and the Octave of Easter, this Mass will not be used until after Divine Mercy Sunday, but I share with you the Collect (Opening Prayer) as a beautiful prayer to add to your own intercessions these days:

***Almighty and Eternal God,
our refuge in every danger,
to whom we turn in our distress;
in faith we pray,
look with compassion on the afflicted,
grant eternal rest to the dead, comfort to mourners,
healing to the sick, peace to the dying,
strength to healthcare workers, wisdom to our leaders,
and the courage to reach out to all in love,
So that together we may give glory to your holy name.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,***

God, forever and ever.

Divine Mercy Sunday

The Sunday after Easter has become Divine Mercy Sunday in the Church's calendar. The customary afternoon observance in honor of God's Mercy revealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus will not take place this year, but we are considering other ways to mark this day. Please check back for details.

First Communion, Confirmation

Both of these sacramental celebrations will be delayed this year as well. So many family milestones and rituals are altered during this time. Bishop Kettler will decide on a revised Confirmation schedule, as only the diocesan Bishop is the ordinary minister of that sacrament. We are looking at our options for First Communions, and will let you know as soon as we can on those Masses with our young people. In the meantime, please hold them and their families in your prayers as well.