

From Your Pastor

The Easter Triduum ~ The Church's High Holy Days

With today's celebration of the triumphant entrance of the Lord into Jerusalem, we begin our annual Holy Week which culminates in the Easter Triduum (the "three days") of the Lord's Passion, Death and Resurrection. The Triduum begins on Holy Thursday evening with the Mass of the Lord's Supper and concludes on Sunday evening, following the Masses of Easter Day, with Vespers or Evening Prayer.

There is no other time in the Church's liturgical year more significant than the Easter Triduum. As important as are the other Solemnities of the Lord, including Christmas, they all take their meaning from and point to the Paschal Mystery, the salvation that Jesus won for us by suffering death on the cross and rising from the dead. The words of the Angel Gabriel to Joseph tell the whole story: "[Mary] will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:21). The very name "Jesus" means "God saves."

There are three liturgical moments during the Triduum: the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday evening; the Celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday afternoon; and the Mass of the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday night, with Masses celebrating the Lord's Resurrection on Easter Sunday. Though each of these different liturgies remembers and commemorates anew a distinct moment of the Paschal Mystery, the Easter Triduum is one event. This is because it is impossible to separate the Lord's Passion or Death or Resurrection from one another. Consequently, the three liturgies of the Triduum are celebrated as if they belong to one prayer. Thus, the Mass of the Lord's Supper begins, as does every Catholic prayer, with the Sign of the Cross. The Sign of the Cross is not made again until the prayer is concluded at the Final Blessing of the Easter Vigil.

Because it is during the Easter Triduum that we celebrate the central mystery of our faith – Christ's

saving Death and Resurrection, it is not surprising that these three days are brilliant in illuminating the other mysteries of our faith. These past weeks of Lent I have been reflecting especially on two. The first is the mystery of the unity of the Church.

When we think of the Lord's Last Supper, we very often remember his gifts to us that night of the Eucharist and of the Ministerial Priesthood. But there was another gift that Jesus begged the Father to give us. "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they may be in us" (Jn 17:20-21). On the night before he died, Jesus prayed for the unity of all his disciples. It was his deepest desire that the Church would experience and reflect the unity that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit live in the communion of the Trinity. Sadly, however, we Christians have broken from one another in many ways through the centuries and have become more of a scandal or stumbling block to the unity we have in Christ than a witness. May Christ draw all Christians more closely into himself and more fully towards each other during this Holy Week.

A second mystery that is illuminated beautifully during the Triduum is the mystery of love. As Jesus tells us, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). Reflecting later on this, St. John tells his disciples, "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins" (1Jn 4:10). What an extraordinary mystery. Though our disobedience made us completely undeserving, God's love for us never flagged. In his love he forgave us and reconciled us to himself in Christ his Son. During this Holy Week, may the example of Christ's love become more the model and pattern for our love of God and our love of one another.



God bless each of you.

Mrs. Fay