

It's here! As Catholics, we are very incarnational. Jesus Christ became flesh, and so the material world becomes the place now where it is possible for us to begin sharing in his divinity as his grace becomes real in our lives. That is what Holy Week is all about – it's not just the story of Christ, but hopefully, the story of us with Christ. As St. Paul says, we must “make up for what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ.” (Col. 1:24) What is lacking is us. His death means nothing for us personally, unless we are there with him. This Holy Week, enter into the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Of all the weeks to live well, this one matters the most. May we not be like so many of the Apostles and disciples who abandon Jesus this week.

We begin with **Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord**. As Jesus (in the person of the priest) enters the Holy City (in our case, the Heavenly Jerusalem instead of the earthly one), we wave our palms—signs of victory. The Liturgy begins with an excitement and joy but quickly turns as we remember the words of Jesus—that that victory only comes about through his suffering and death. **Come, and join Jesus as he enters the Holy City, there to offer the perfect sacrifice to our Father in Heaven for the salvation of the world.**

The next couple of days should be marked by simplicity—the story of the Passion still fresh in our minds. Wednesday is known as Spy Wednesday, for it was on this day that Judas agreed to hand Jesus over for 30 pieces of silver. He had certain expectations of the Messiah that Jesus wasn't living up to. And so, he turns away from him. It's a good time for extra quiet prayer, as we reflect on the ways we ourselves have tried to tell him how to be God, and how to save us, as we know better. Unlike Judas, may we abandon ourselves, our will, our plans, our expectations, our wisdom, to the One who has always loved us. **Join Jesus as He prepares to offer his life for you and your sins.**

Holy Thursday begins the Sacred Triduum—these three days which comprise the Paschal Mystery, the work of Christ for our salvation. On this day, we enter into the Upper Room, where Jesus will stoop to wash the feet of the Apostles, he gives us a model of charity. At the Last Supper Jesus gives us the Eucharist and institutes the Priesthood—two sacraments which are inseparable. As the meal ends, he leaves and invites his Apostles to keep watch with him as he makes his final preparation for the Passion. At the end of the Liturgy, we process with our Lord to the Altar of Repose, as we hear the words of Jesus, “Could you not keep watch with me for one hour?” May we not fall asleep on him as did his disciples that night. Mass starts at 7PM at St. Joseph and Mary, Queen of Peace and adoration will continue until midnight. **Come, and join Jesus in the Upper Room, and journey with him to keep watch in the Garden of Gethsemane.**

After undergoing his trial through the night and morning, on **Good Friday** Jesus carries his cross to Calvary—there to die for us and our sins. Darkness descends. There is a stillness, a sadness. The tabernacle is empty. The greatest of prayers this day is the Liturgy of the Lord's Passion, which will take place at 3PM at Our Lady of Sorrows, and 7PM at St. Joseph and Mary, Queen of Peace. We once again hear the story of Jesus' death for us and then pray for the needs of the world – that this death, his sacrifice, might have meaning. And

then the Crucified Christ comes into our midst. The genuflection, normally reserved for the Eucharist, is made to the Holy Cross this day – for Christ is there. It is raised aloft three times, as we are invited to come and adore. For the veneration, last year we began using a cross with the body of Jesus on it, so that we may venerate our Lord Himself and not simply the cross upon which he died for us. **Come, and join with Jesus on the Cross as he offers his life for you.**

Jesus is in the tomb. For the Apostles and so many others, it was a crisis of faith. After three years, Jesus appears to abandon them, all for nothing. He is dead, enclosed in the darkness of the tomb. And we are numb at his loss and immensity of what he has given for us. Even though we know the end of the story, it is very easy to experience ourselves that sense of abandonment which they experienced. The fasting and abstinence of Good Friday should continue as is able. **Keep watch, as Jesus lies in the tomb.**

On Holy Saturday night, after darkness descends, Jesus Christ rises from the dead and the Church springs back to life with Easter glory and joy. The **Easter Vigil** is the high point of the entire year. It begins at 8:30PM at St. Joseph and Mary, Queen of Peace, as the Easter Fire scatters the darkness. The new Easter candle—a symbol of Christ Himself—is blessed and leads us into the Church. The darkness has not overcome the light, but instead the flame spreads. The light of Christ illumines the whole church as the priest sings the ancient hymn to the candle, to the light, and to this glorious night. This begins a reflection on the many ways in times past God tried to bring us light, as we hear the story of salvation history with several readings. This is the night when the Elect are Baptized and receive Confirmation and the Eucharist as well, 32 this year from amongst the Parish Family. It is a longer Mass than usual—about three hours—but you lose all sense of time within this beautiful drama that we are caught up into. I can't encourage/beg you enough to come to each of the Triduum Liturgies, but especially the Great Vigil. **Come, and join with Jesus, as he rises from the dead – that you may rise with him!**