



Dear Parishioners,

In the following pages, is provided an overview of the Holy Week celebrations that we may enter more fully into this week's solemn, meaningful, and joyous events of Christ's Paschal Mystery!

Passion (Palm) Sunday: On this day, the Church celebrates the entrance of Christ the Lord into Jerusalem to accomplish his Paschal Mystery": his dying, rising, and glorification for the salvation of the world (*Roman Missal*, p.254). The memorial of this event is titled, "*The Commemoration of the Lord's Entrance into Jerusalem*"; it is to be included in every Passion Sunday Mass. The manner in which each parish celebrates this commemoration may differ, however, because the *Roman Missal* provides three optional forms: (1) "The Procession", (2) "The Solemn Entrance", and (3) "The Simple Entrance". The palm branches used on this day are blessed and an additional gospel is proclaimed before the entrance procession. When the entrance procession is complete, the priest venerates the altar and prays the *Collect Prayer* (n.b. the *Penitential Rite* is omitted as per the instructions in the *Roman Missal*, p.264).

The Conclusion of Lent: The Season of Lent ends when the Church begins the evening "*Mass of the Lord's Supper*" on Holy Thursday. This Holy Mass, in turn, is the beginning of the Easter Triduum.

The Triduum: this is one great feast comprised of three days: [1] Thursday evening to Friday evening; [2] Friday evening to Saturday evening; and [3] Saturday evening to Sunday evening. The *General Norms for the Liturgical Year*, #18, states: "The Easter Triduum of the passion and the resurrection of Christ is thus the culmination of the entire liturgical year." It adds that the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday night is the "high point" of the Triduum and of the entire liturgical year because the Easter Vigil "ranks as the mother of all vigils" (#19, #21). This vigil, it states, should take place at night (#21).

For centuries, it is on this holiest of nights that the Church has celebrated its initiation sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist) with its Elect and Candidates. The *General Norms for the Liturgical Year* states: "Keeping watch, the Church awaits Christ's resurrection and celebrates it in the sacraments" (#21). This celebration by the local Church is more meaningful when parishioners, elect, and candidates have journeyed together toward this holy night. Parishioners are encouraged, therefore, to do all that is possible to participate in the Easter Vigil for two reasons: (1) due to its primacy as the "high point" of the entire liturgical year and (2) to support and to celebrate with those who are asking for full membership in the Catholic Church.

The Days of the Triduum

(a) Holy Thursday: The evening *Mass of the Lord's Supper* should be celebrated at the most suitable evening hour. The *Washing of the Feet* is encouraged in all parishes. This rite should be characterized by its simplicity, allowing the powerful gesture of the Servant-Christ to model for us the charity and the humility required of all Christ's disciples. In the washing of feet, we should see our commitment to one another and the extent of that commitment. The *General Intercessions* follow the Washing of the Feet; the *Profession of Faith (Creed)* is omitted. The Holy Oils that were blessed by the bishop at the Chrism Mass are presented to the pastor for use in the parish community.

The *Roman Missal* (p.284) suggests that gifts for the poor may be brought forward in procession at the *Presentation of the Gifts*. There is no collection on Holy Thursday. On page 281, the *Roman Missal* also gives the instruction: "*The tabernacle should be entirely empty [i.e., before the Mass begins]; but a sufficient amount of bread should be consecrated in this Mass for the communion of the clergy and the people on this and the following day [i.e. Good Friday]*". Though Holy Communion may be brought to the sick today, Communion may be distributed at the church itself only within the Mass.

Following the *Prayer after Communion*, the *Blessed Sacrament* is transferred to the place of reposition (i.e. to the Altar of Repose). The rite for this procession is described in the *Roman Missal*, which reads: "The faithful are invited to continue adoration before the *Blessed Sacrament* for a suitable length of time during the night..."(p.293). *Adoration of our Lord* will continue until 10:00 p.m.

(b) Good Friday: this is not a Mass, but, instead, a service, which begins in silence; the *Roman Missal* states: "On the afternoon of this day, about three o'clock, there takes place the celebration of the Lord's Passion..." (p.295). The *Roman Missal* goes on to read: "The Priest and the Deacon, if a Deacon is

present, wearing red vestments as for Mass, go to the altar in silence and, after making a reverence to the altar, prostrate themselves [...] All others kneel.” (p.295). All pray silently for awhile. Then the Priest (and Deacon) go to their chairs. A prayer is said or sung without using the collect words, “Let us pray.” The Liturgy of the Word follows. A brief homily may be given. The General Intercessions are prayed.

A collection is taken today for those pastoral, charitable, educational and social works that the Church supports in the Holy Land for the welfare of Christians and local communities as well as the upkeep of the holy places. The suggested time for the collection is before the Adoration of the Holy Cross. Proceeds are to be forwarded to the Financial Office of the Diocese.

The Adoration of the Holy Cross follows. During the adoration, suitable songs are sung. The *Roman Missal* states: “Only one Cross should be offered for adoration” (p. 310). If the number of people makes it impossible for everyone to adore the cross individually, the priest may take the cross, after some of the faithful have adored it, and stand in the centre in front of the altar. In a few words the priest invites the people to adore the cross, and then holds it up briefly for them to worship in silence.” (p.310). The *Roman Missal* suggests that the adoration be completed by making “a simple genuflection” or by “some other sign appropriate to the usage of the region, for example, by kissing the cross” (p.310).

Holy Communion is distributed only within the liturgy of the Lord’s Passion, but may be taken to the sick at any time of the day. The Good Friday celebration ends in silence (i.e., there is no dismissal because we are celebrating one continuous feast over the three days of the Triduum).

Though parishes may plan other services on Good Friday (e.g., Stations of the Cross or the Way of the Cross), it should be clear that the Celebration of the Lord’s Passion has priority on this day.

(c) Holy Saturday: The *Roman Missal* states: “On Holy Saturday the Church waits at the Lord’s tomb in prayer and fasting, meditating on his Passion and Death, and on his Descent into Hell, and awaiting his Resurrection. The Church abstains from the Sacrifice of the Mass, with the sacred table left bare” (p.320). Consequently, Holy Communion may be given on this day only as Viaticum. Ordinary Communion visits to the sick should be done earlier in the week and on Easter.

(d) The Easter Vigil: The Easter Vigil is the only liturgy that may be celebrated this night.

The *Roman Missal* tells us that the proclamation of Old Testament scripture readings is a fundamental element of the Easter Vigil as these readings help us to meditate “on the wonders the Lord God has done for his people from the beginning” (p. 323).

This evening’s liturgy is a “Vigil” and should be conducted as such. It begins in darkness with God’s People carrying lit candles in symbolic commemoration of: (1) the Pillar of Light that led the Chosen People through the desert (Exod.13:21); (2) the admonition of our Lord to be ready and watchful for his second coming, with lamps lit (Lk.12:35); and (3) our Lord, who is the Light of the World (Jn.8:12).

The Easter Vigil liturgy attains its fullness when it includes the Sacrament of Baptism for in this sacrament we enter into the Lord’s Paschal Mystery (his dying and rising). The Elect (those to be baptized) and the Candidates (those already baptized) are Confirmed and receive First Eucharist at the Easter Vigil Mass.

As on Holy Thursday and Good Friday, the tabernacle is empty for the Vigil. After the reception of Holy Communion, the Body of Christ is reposed in the tabernacle, and the tabernacle light shines once again.

(e) The Easter Season: The three days of the Triduum end with Evening Prayer on Easter Sunday. The Triduum leads us into the Easter season: the fifty days celebrated from Easter Sunday until Pentecost.

May God bless you abundantly this Holy Week and in the Easter Season!

Sincerely, Fr. John.

