

AN EXPLANATION OF HOLY WEEK

Dear Parishioners,

We have now arrived at the final week of our Lenten journey in preparation for the great celebration of Easter. Holy Week is utterly unique in the worship cycle of the Church, and I wish strongly to encourage you to participate in the liturgies of these final days.

Holy Thursday marks the anniversary of the Institution of the Priesthood and the Institution of the Eucharist. The first is commemorated at what is called the **Chrism Mass**, which is celebrated only at the Cathedral, with the Bishop and his priests gathered about him. It is at this Mass that the priests renew their vows and at which the Bishop blesses all the holy oils to be used for the forthcoming year.

In all the parishes the latter is commemorated with the **Mass of the Lord's Supper**. This is a very beautiful celebration at which the priest performs the ritual foot washing in imitation of Our Lord washing His Apostles' feet and as a sign of service. The Eucharist is then carried in solemn procession to an altar of repose, where adoration continues into the night. It is as if we are beckoned to keep watch again with Our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Good Friday is perhaps the most solemn and sacred day of the year, as it commemorates the passion and death of Our Lord. This is the only day of the year when the Mass is not offered. Indeed, the tabernacles themselves will not contain the Holy Eucharist on that day. We will participate in the desolation of the Lord's followers as they awaited His Resurrection. There will be one liturgy, however, in which we will read the **Passion Narrative and Venerate the Cross**. Communion will be distributed, but with Hosts consecrated the evening before.

It is not, strictly speaking, Church law, yet it is certainly the common judgment of Catholic piety that one does not work on this day, nor make others work. *I strongly urge you to offer this sign of respect for Our Lord by not working, especially between the hours of 12:00 and 3:00 PM, in observance of Jesus' passion on the Cross.*

Holy Saturday continues the observance of Good Friday, and it is encouraged that one maintain at least a mitigated fast and abstinence until the evening liturgy. There is only one Mass this day, to be offered only after sundown. This is called the **Easter Vigil Mass**. It is at this Mass – which lasts at least two hours – that adult converts are received into the Catholic Church. Our parish will be receiving three individuals that night. The Easter Vigil begins with the lighting of the Easter fire outside, from which the Paschal Candle is lit and carried into the darkened church, dispelling the darkness as Christ is the Light of the World. If you have never participated in the liturgies of these three days, called the **Sacred Triduum**, I greatly encourage you to do so this year.

The Church has shown us the path into the arms of Jesus, yet it is for us freely to make the decision to walk it.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

Father de Rosa