

## **May the Lord give you Peace!**

### **Lent-Triduum-Easter**

For Forty Days, we have been journeying with ashes on our forehead toward the Easter Baptismal Font. These six weeks of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving have been a season of changing our minds and hearts, of hearing the cry of the poor, of feeding the hungry and giving drink to the thirsty, of listening to God's Word more often and with greater attention, of forgiving others as God's forgives us. With prayer and fellowship, we have walked with the Catechumens (now called Elect) these weeks of their final preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation on Holy Saturday at the Vigil Service – Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.

Hopefully, we have experienced a greater freedom in knowing and following Jesus the Christ as our friend, our Redeemer, our Savior, our Liberator, our God. Likewise, hopefully we have experienced a greater openness and compassion for the people with whom we live and work and share our lives. Lent is a time to free our hearts to love more, both God and people. Have you noticed a difference in your own heart?

### **Palm Sunday**

The first day of April, April Fools' Day, begins the Week called Holy. The new Roman Missal names this Sunday as "Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord." The week when we celebrate how evil is fooled by Love, and death is fooled by Life Himself. Evil and Death become the fools. We wave palms on Palm Sunday recognizing and hailing Jesus as Lord of our lives. Hosanna (Hebrew for Save! Pray! Praise the one who Saves!) The priest wears red vestments. Red is color of blood, love, and martyrdom. Jesus' love for us is poured out of his body as he embraces martyrdom that we may have forgiveness and peace, hope and life everlasting. Hosanna, Lord Jesus! The Gospel of the Passion is proclaimed as we enter into Holy Week.

### **Holy Thursday**

Lent continues until the evening of Holy Thursday, until the beginning of the Mass of the Lord's Supper. With Washing Feet and Banqueting on the Lord, we enter into the Three Days, the Triduum (Latin for three days), the highest holy days of the year. These three days are marked with the symbols of aprons and towels, nails and cross, fire-water-oil-bread and wine. The three Triduum collections are for the poor on Holy Thursday, on Good Friday for the Christians in the Holy Land and for the Franciscan Friars who care for the Holy Land shrines, for the many Palestinian Catholics and their schools, churches, and need support of all kinds, and on Holy Saturday for the needs of the local church where you live.

On Holy Thursday we hear the Gospel of the Washing of Feet – “and what I your master and teacher have done, so you also need to do.” As Jesus put a towel around his waist as his apron, so we need to again dedicate ourselves to wearing our towels of service of others. I believe that when we baptize adults and children, we need to give them an apron and say welcome to the Church of Service, the Church of Jesus the Servant. Get busy and wash feet! Perhaps when we die, the Lord will ask to see our aprons. Hopefully, we will know where we put this sign of service and that our apron will be a bit torn and worn out. To be sure we have the strength to wash feet in all kinds of service of others, Jesus gives us food and drink to nourish our minds, hearts, and bodies. “Take and eat! Take and drink! Wash feet as I washed your feet!”

(The procession at the end of the Holy Thursday Mass is an action we used to do at the end of every mass – take the extra consecrated Bread to the Tabernacle that was in a separate room from the gathering place for the church. The Tabernacle held the Eucharistic Bread for the sick who could not come to the Table with the community. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is a much later development.)

## **Good Friday**

This Friday called Good is named in the new Roman Missal as “Friday of the Passion of the Lord.” The color of blood, martyrdom, and love is the color of today’s vestment. A solemn service of Liturgy of the Word with John’s account of the Passion and Death of Jesus is proclaimed. We then respond to that solemn Word that Jesus is the new Passover and High Priest by praying the ten Solemn Intentions/Prayers of the Faithful. Second Action is the Veneration of the Cross. The third action is to receive the Body of Christ in a simple Communion Service.

All ends in silence. There was no dismissal to Holy Thursday Liturgy nor for today’s Service. There is no ending of the first two days of the Triduum. One beginning of these Three Days opens the Holy Thursday celebration. The closing of the Triduum happens at the end of the Vigil Service on Holy Saturday. Only at that closing moment do we hear: God in Peace! Alleluia! Alleluia! One celebration of Christ Passing Over begins with Mass on Holy Thursday and ends with Easter Vigil Mass. The Easter Sunday Mass through to Easter Evening Vespers continues what began at the Vigil Mass.

## **Holy Saturday**

This is a day of rest and reflection at the tomb of Jesus until darkness pushes out all light and hope. And then suddenly the brightness of the Fire, holy and blessed, announces joyfully that the Lord is Risen! Alleluia! (That wonder-filled word that we have not heard or sang for six weeks! That Hebrew word that means Praise God!) Thus begins the Easter Vigil in the Holy Night (Roman Missal). With Fire from the newly blessed Paschal Candle all the candles held by the congregation are lighted. Darkness is vanquished and dispelled! We can see hope shine on the faces of our brothers and sisters in the Lord! The Solemn sung Exsultet – Rejoice! Chant is sung praising God for the wonders of Christ rising from the dead.

Then we tell stories – from Creation to Resurrection – our stories, our journey from goodness to sin to prophets’ encouragement, through Jesus’ tomb to a newness of life. We are our stories. Like every good story, we can never hear it too often. So listen up to the great story telling around the Fire of the Paschal Candle, symbol of the Resurrected Christ in our midst.

The Elect are called to the Waters of the Baptismal Font – death dealing and life giving waters. Blessings are prayed over the water, the Paschal Candle is plunged into the water, a sign of the water being impregnated by Christ who shed his last drops of water and blood on the cross as the soldier pierced his side and heart. Then one by one, the Catechumens, called the Elect since the first Sunday of Lent, enter the Font to be plunged into and under the water, to die and then rise in the fullness of Christ’s life and love. While the waters are barely dried, the priest pours the oil of Chrism on the head of the newly Baptized now-and-forever Christian to confirm him/her in the Church. Thus, the second Sacrament of Initiation is celebrated. All the Church gathered then renews their Baptismal Vows. Lent is the preparation for this moment of saying yes once again and more fully than ever before to saying no to sin and evil and to saying yes to God, Father-Son-Holy Spirit. We say YES to being the Body of Christ, to being Christ’s heart and hands, his love and compassion, his forgiveness for all the world. Only say yes and renew your vows if you mean to be hope and healing for the world.

Then we gather at the Table for the great Prayer of the Church – the Eucharistic Prayer. We stand together giving thanks and praise to God, our heavenly Father and holy Mother, for all the many gifts we receive especially for Jesus and for their gift of the Holy Spirit. Alleluia! Alleluia! The newly Baptized and Confirmed are now ready to eat and drink of the Body and Blood of Christ – their first Communion, unity with Christ and with all Christ’s Body, each of us.

## **Easter Season**

The joy and profound grace of Christ’s Death and Resurrection cannot be celebrated only by one Day of Remembrance, Easter Sunday. No, Easter bursts forth into seven weeks of Easter-ing with joy and lots of alleluias! As the Irish poet Gerard Manly Hopkins so beautifully wrote of this Easter event in his drama-like poem “The Wreck of the Deutschland”:

“Let him easter in us,  
be a dayspring to the dimness of us,  
be a crimson-cressed east.”

We need to return to the empty tomb again and again during this Easter Season of seven weeks. We need to peer in to see the place Jesus’ body had lain in death but has now been resurrected. With awe and wonder, may our hearts near burst with joy and gratitude for a God who loves us so very much, who forgives us so readily, who walks with us

through every storm and trial for these Fifty Days and until the end of time. Forty Days of Lent and Fifty Days of Easter, Forty Days of fasting and Fifty Days of Feasting. Yeah God! Alleluia! For Fifty Days the Church will hear from the Acts of the Apostles – the story of the difference the Risen Lord and the Holy Spirit made in the lives of the early believers during the first thirty years of the Church.

As St Augustine wrote in the fifth century: “Be an Alleluia from the top of your head to the bottom of your feet!”

May the Lord easter in you and be a Dayspring for any dimness in you!