

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

Holy Week begins with today's celebration of Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord! This is it — our holiest week of the year! Today we have recalled the entrance of Christ the Lord into Jerusalem to accomplish his Paschal Mystery. This week we are asked to enter deeply into the mystery of his dying and rising, making that Paschal Mystery our own mystery; we are called to embrace it more fully and really make it the center of the way we live. Take a few moments to reflect on the Entrance Antiphon for the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, the antiphon and call to worship that inaugurates the Sacred Paschal Triduum: *We should glory in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom is our salvation, life and resurrection, through whom we are saved and delivered.* That antiphon sums up the mystery we should be contemplating and immersing ourselves in all this week.

We take this opportunity to welcome to our Palm Sunday Masses those parishioners who are not regular participants but who have come for Palm Sunday. We are very happy to have you with us and you have enriched our worship through your participation. We extend to you a warm invitation to come more frequently on Sundays, indeed, to come weekly. We want you to share in the richness and the blessings that come from regular participation in Sunday Mass, and we want you to know you are a valued part of our community. We need you with us, because as the Body of Christ we are diminished when all the members of the Body are not together. We hope to see you again next Sunday, Easter Sunday, and every Sunday thereafter. If there is anything at all that I as your Pastor, or that any of the other priests, can do to facilitate your participation in the life of the parish, please do not hesitate to contact us. We will be happy to make the time to meet with you and talk things over.

Easter Spiritual Bouquet Cards

I take this opportunity to remind you that all the Masses on Easter Sunday will be for the intentions of the Easter Spiritual Bouquet Cards. If you would like to participate in this meaningful custom and have your intentions prayed for, please use the cards and envelopes available and be sure to return them before Easter Sunday to

the rectory.

Reconciliation Monday

This Monday, April 14, is our annual Diocesan Day of Reconciliation. Priests will be continuously available in the church from 3:00-9:00 p.m. to hear Confessions. What a great opportunity this is to come and celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation! You are especially encouraged to come if you have been away from the Sacrament for a long time. If the door to a Confessional is open and the light is on inside, that means the priest inside is "open for business" — come on in! We might even have a priest just sitting somewhere in the church...if that's the case, go right up to him! Plan now on coming to Confession on "Reconciliation Monday," April 14.

Morning Prayer on Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday

In accord with the ancient tradition of the Church, the Mass celebrated on Holy Thursday is the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, there is no Mass whatsoever on Good Friday, and the only Mass on Holy Saturday is the great Easter Vigil in the evening. Thus, the usual weekday Masses are not celebrated those days.

However, the **daily prayer of the Church IS celebrated: the Liturgy of the Hours!** We will be celebrating **Morning Prayer** at 9:00 a.m. each day and I strongly urge everyone to attend these liturgies. The *General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours* reminds us of the importance of parish communities gathering to pray the Liturgy of the Hours as a means of carrying out the mission to pray unceasingly: *"In the Holy Spirit Christ carries out through the church 'the task of redeeming humanity and giving perfect glory to God,' not only when the Eucharist is celebrated and the sacraments administered but also in other ways and especially when the Liturgy of the Hours is celebrated. There [in the Liturgy of the Hours] Christ himself is present — in the gathered community, in the proclamation of God's word, 'in the prayer and song of the Church.'"* (#13)

We are already familiar with the Liturgy of the Hours as we have been gathering to pray Evening Prayer after the 5:00 p.m. Masses on Saturdays and Sundays. It is important that we as a parish come together to pray Morning Prayer on Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. I

hope you will be able to join us as these liturgies, in addition to the other celebrations, are important avenues for entering into the spirituality of the days, and because they provide the structure for a rhythm of daily prayer that will set these days aside as holy and as “outside of time.”

Procession with Gifts for the Poor on Holy Thursday

There is a rubric in the Missal for the Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday that says: *“At the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, there may be a procession of the faithful in which gifts for the poor may be presented with the bread and wine.”* Insofar as one of the principal mysteries commemorated on Holy Thursday is the Lord’s command to love one another (as ritualized in the Washing of Feet), we can see how this procession with gifts for the poor fits right in with what we are celebrating.

This year at OLPH we will use this option. **Therefore, all who attend the Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday should bring some item for the poor.** I suggest you check the shopping list for the St. Vincent de Paul food pantry printed elsewhere in this bulletin and bring one or more of those items. **THEN, DO NOT BRING YOUR GIFT TO THE FRONT OF THE SANCTUARY BEFORE MASS BEGINS! HOLD ONTO IT — YOU WILL CARRY IT UP IN PROCESSION AT THE USUAL TIME OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE GIFTS, AS DIRECTED BY THE USHERS.** What a beautiful ritual enactment this will be, announcing that “where true charity is dwelling, God is present there.”

Good Friday Adoration of the Holy Cross

In keeping with the rubrics of the Roman Missal we will again be using only one Cross for adoration on Good Friday. **As the congregation comes forward to show reverence to the Cross, they should do so coming forward three (3) people at a time, following the direction of those who will be ushering the assembly.** Please keep in mind that this is a communal adoration of the Cross, and not a time for individual adoration. Personal reverence and adoration may take place after the liturgy ends, but during the liturgy itself is not the time for each person to have their few individual moments of “private time” for adora-

tion; it is not necessary for each person to make a sign of reverence individually. Your cooperation of following the direction of the assistants is greatly appreciated.

Also, a collection is usually taken up on Good Friday, in support of the churches in the Holy Land. However, given the unique nature of the liturgy on Good Friday, which is not a Mass, the taking up of a collection in the way usually done on Sundays becomes somewhat problematic. Because of this, we will not actually be taking up a collection on Good Friday. Instead, baskets will be available throughout the church. You are asked to leave your Good Friday Holy Land Offering envelope in one of those baskets as you either enter or leave the church. Thank you for your attention to this.

See you at the Sacred Paschal Triduum!

So, we look forward to seeing you at the liturgies of the Sacred Paschal Triduum: the Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday evening, April 17; the Commemoration of the Lord’s Passion on Good Friday, April 18, at either 3:00 p.m. or 8:00 p.m.; the Solemn Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday night, 8:00 p.m. on April 19; and, of course, Morning Prayer on each of those days. In addition, don’t forget that there is the diocesan celebration of the Chrism Mass at 11:00 a.m. on Holy Thursday morning at St. Agnes Cathedral in Rockville Centre, to which everyone in the diocese is invited. These days, the heart of our liturgical year and the holiest days of all, should not be business as usual, but rather should be days set apart and days “outside of time” as we enter deeply into the Lord’s Paschal Mystery. Make the most of these days; you will be glad you did.

In conclusion...

Together, let’s aim high in Christ. Together, let’s bring out the best in each other. Together, let’s be the best we can be in Christ.

And let’s always remember: LOVE IS A GIFT.

Sincerely,

