

***Thank you to all for an extraordinary Holy Week!***

Today we celebrate the Second Sunday of Easter, and as we complete the Octave of Easter, we look back on the extraordinary liturgies that made up the days of Holy Week and the Sacred Paschal Triduum. We celebrated them so well: Palm Sunday, including the special Procession at the 5:00 Saturday Mass; Holy Thursday; Good Friday; the Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday; Morning Prayer on Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. Those liturgies do not just happen; they are the result of much love, time, devotion, energy and hard work offered by many, many people too numerous for me to name individually. **I take this opportunity to publicly thank everyone who in any way was involved in bringing about our beautiful and prayerful celebrations during Holy Week and the Sacred Paschal Triduum. You know who you are: all the liturgical ministers, the Liturgy Committee, all who pitched in to decorate our liturgical environment and to keep things clean and orderly, and so many others who pitched in to do the things that needed to be done. Thank you for the offering of the gift of yourself, and know that you have made a big difference in people's spirituality at OLPH!**

Remember that YOU, the “person in the pew,” are part of those liturgical ministers. The liturgies of the Sacred Paschal Triduum give us the opportunity to enter into the Paschal Mystery through rituals that we do only once a year, and EVERYONE must do his or her part in praying those rituals well. They are out-of-the ordinary rituals; they demand more of us. They demand that we do things we don't normally do. They demand that EVERYONE be 100% attentive and focused and serious about doing the “work” of the liturgy. I'm happy to say we did that very, very well here at OLPH! This parish truly is “the place to be,” and I am so happy and privileged to be your Pastor. This is a parish where people pray the liturgy well, and it really makes a difference in each and every one of our lives.

***Easter Time***

So, we are at the beginning of the great liturgical season of fifty days known as Easter Time. The *Circular Letter Concerning the*

*Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts* reminds us, “The celebration of Easter is prolonged throughout the Easter season. The fifty days from Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday are celebrated as one feast day, the ‘great Sunday.’” (#100)

That's quite a challenge, isn't it — to keep the joy, festivity, and enthusiasm going for fifty days so that the entire period is celebrated as one “great Sunday.” Yet, that is indeed the challenge the Church gives to us, because Easter is that important. The central mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ must take center place in our life. I like to think that we are (“merely”) continuing along in the midst of the **great 90 days of Lent-Easter!** Remember, it's always the total Paschal Mystery of both the Lord's death and resurrection that we are always celebrating.

How will you make the 50 days of Easter Time special and significant in your spiritual life, as I'm sure the 40 days of Lent were? Will you continue to attend daily Mass as perhaps you did during Lent? Will you be using our *Little White Book* of Easter Time reflections? What additional prayer will you be doing during Easter Time? Give yourself the gift of really immersing yourself in the joy and new life of the 50 days of Easter Time!

***First Communion Season***

Fasten your seat belts, because as of this Saturday, it's “away we go” with our Saturday First Communion Masses! This coming Saturday, May 3, followed by next Saturday, May 10, we will be having two Masses each day for First Holy Communions. What a wonderful time it is in the life of our parish as we, as a community of faith, welcome those baptized as infants to now share in the fellowship of the heavenly banquet at the Eucharistic table! What a wonderful time it is for the children and their families as these children now deepen their intimacy and union with the Lord Jesus by partaking of the gift of His Body and Blood! Last Sunday we celebrated the first of our First Communions at a parish Sunday Mass, and that will continue at several Sunday Masses throughout Easter Time. We continue to congratulate and to pray for all our First

Communicants and their families during these joy-filled resurrection days of Easter Time!

***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,