

FROM THE PASTOR'S PRINTER

WHAT WONDROUS LOVE IS THIS? Today we enter a week of celebrating the incomprehensible love of God. Hopefully, by understanding what we are doing, more of us may be drawn to these sacred rites.

HOLY THURSDAY marks the end of Lent as the Mass of the Lord's Supper begins. We are drawn not only into this celebration, but the entire three days by a hymn that exalts the cross of Christ not as an instrument of torturous death but as the lifegiving tree that has become through the victory of Christ over sin and death. During the Triduum we do not play act that we do not know the end of the story, but rather because we know the end, we come with the greatest praise. On this evening, we celebrate the greatest gift Christ gave us to live in Him, the gift of the new and eternal covenant in His Blood, which is nourished within us by His own Body and Blood. We also remember the implication of living in Christ which is nothing less than this: to be people of humble service to one another and to the world as He was to us. Washing feet in church is not to simply remember what He did, but what we are to do! On this day, except in the most urgent of situations, only one Mass is celebrated to show the unity of believers in the one Sacrifice of Christ who have shared in the one Bread and one Cup of the Lord. The liturgy does not end with a blessing as usual, but with a procession with the Holy Eucharist to the place of repossession until it is received on Good Friday. We are urged to stay with the Lord in prayer, reflection, and adoration on the eve of His Passion.

Before the Mass of the Lord's Supper, the holy oils – Oil of Catechumens, Oil of the Sick, and Chrism – that were blessed by the bishop earlier in the week at the Chrism Mass are presented in a spirit of thanksgiving for the grace of God working through them at the Easter Vigil (Chrism) and throughout the year.

GOOD FRIDAY ~ No Mass is celebrated on this day of terror and grace; rather, we celebrate the Lord's Passion as we begin in silent and solemn adoration. Through the words of the prophet Isaiah and the letter to the Hebrews we hear that the terrifying death that Jesus experienced because of our sins was not in vain, but bought Him victory and through His deliberate priestly offering of Himself, brought victory to us. The Passion from John's Gospel drives home that Jesus was not an unwitting idealist who fell into

the hands of evil men, but one who willingly confronted evil in a stupendous battle of suffering, humiliation, and death for our sake. As the High Priest *par excellence* made sacrifice for us, we then pray for all creation in the intercessions that follow. Then, with an awareness of the effects of our sins and gratitude for being freed from the chains of Satan, we approach the cross in adoration and by this act, unite ourselves to the suffering and death of Christ so that we may share in eternal life and glory. Bringing this commitment to its fullest expression, we receive Holy Communion set aside from Mass the night before. In reverent silence, we go forth to reflect on our own the meaning of what we have celebrated, aware of our own part in the Lord's Passion, and of the victory of the love of God over our sin and death.

HOLY SATURDAY is a day of silence, with no Mass before the Vigil of the Resurrection, aka, the Easter Vigil. This liturgy is the mother of all we celebrate, for it is the Passover of the Lord from death to life. In the darkness of night, believers gather as the light of Christ shines forth from the Paschal (Easter) candle. By the light of Christ, the Church beautifully proclaims the victory of Christ over sin, Satan, and death. Then, beginning with the story of creation, we listen to God reveal His immeasurable love for us as we journey through the Red Sea, the time of the prophets to the letter to the Romans in which Paul asks, "Are you unaware that that we who have been buried with Christ in the death baptism share in His resurrection?" This leads to the proclamation of the Gospel of risen Christ. On this night of nights, we bring people through the font for Baptism, anoint them with Chrism, and share with them Holy Communion in the Body and Blood of the Lord. It is not simply the passing over of Christ from death to life; it is our passing over because in the water of baptism, the Chrism of Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist, we have been conformed to Christ. This is indeed THE Easter Mass.

EASTER SUNDAY rightly draws a crowd, but for those who have celebrated the liturgies of Holy Week, the meaning of Easter is all the richer in our minds and hearts, and we are drawn to live more fully in the risen Christ.

A blessed and holy week ahead for you, not just in title, but in reality! – Fr. Jeff