

## FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners:

Well, the Season of Lent is quickly coming to an end and Holy Week has arrived. This week is the most important one on the Christian calendar. We should step back from our usual busy-ness and spend time praying about and reflecting on the saving mysteries of our redemption—the passion, death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The observance of Holy Week begins today of course with **Palm Sunday**. After the year 312, when it became legal in the Roman Empire for Christians to worship in public, Christians in Jerusalem began to prayerfully reenact the events of the Passion. On Palm Sunday they gathered in the streets and read the Gospel account of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem to the cheers of the crowd who hailed Him as the Messiah and shouted "Hosanna to the Son of David" as they waved palm branches and laid them on the ground before Him. This is the first part of the liturgy today. The blessed palm branches we have should be taken home and hung by the family crucifix as a reminder that we proclaim Jesus our Savior. (Needless to say, every Catholic home should have at least one crucifix prominently displayed as a sign to all of our Faith.) The tone of the Mass turns more somber as we hear the account of our Lord's passion and death from the Gospel according to St. Luke

On **Holy Thursday**, the **Sacred Triduum** begins (Triduum means "three days" in Latin.) There is only one Mass in the parish on Holy Thursday so that we can all celebrate the Eucharist together. This celebration is a time to recall how at the **Last Supper** Jesus presented the Church the Holy Eucharist when He gave the Apostles bread and wine that He had blessed saying "**This is my Body...This is My Blood....**" At the Holy Thursday Mass we also remember how our Lord established the Sacrament of **Holy Orders** by commanding that His Apostles continue to offer the Eucharist when He said "**Do this in memory of Me.**" The Holy Thursday Mass concludes with a procession with the Blessed Sacrament so that the Eucharist may be reposed in a tabernacle other than the one we normally use. The removal of the Blessed Sacrament from the high altar and the stripping of the altar of all adornments are meant to focus our thoughts on the darkness and absence of consolation Jesus endured after His arrest in the Garden of Olives.

The Friday of Holy Week is of course called **Good Friday**. Understandably many people wonder why we call the day that Jesus was crucified "good." This came about because the Anglo-Saxon tribes that settled in England were Germanic and early English shared many words with German. In German the day our Lord died is called "Gott Freitag", meaning "God's Friday." Overtime in English it *became* "**Good Friday.**" The church remains dark on Good Friday and the tabernacle empty. We commemorate the sacrifice of Jesus that evening by reading St. John's account of our Lord's passion and death. We then have the Veneration of the Cross. This liturgy also goes back to the 300s. It began in Jerusalem where the faithful would kiss or in other ways reverence a relic of the true cross, the instrument of our salvation, on Good Friday.

The Sacred Triduum comes to a joyful climax with the **Easter Vigil Mass** which is offered after sunset on Holy Saturday. At that Mass we celebrate Christ's victory over sin and death in a special way by **baptizing and welcoming new members into the Church**. This Easter we have six adults being baptized into the church: Paul Handwork, Danielle Foss, John & Melissa Fort, Samantha Carter and Rachel Gill. They along with Andy James will be welcomed into the Church and make their first Communion. Rachel Shumaker and Christina De Phillip will join them in receiving the sacrament of Confirmation to complete their initiation into the Church. And all of us together at each of the Easter Masses will renew our baptismal promises as we celebrate our being born again into eternal life through the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We remember what our Lord did at the Last Supper and on the cross at every Mass of course. However, the Holy Week services provide us with an opportunity to remember and give thanks in an especially beautiful and moving way. So I encourage all of you to come to the Mass on Holy Thursday and the Good Friday service. Although there is no obligation to attend, these are truly the high holy days of our Catholic faith. **Could anything else you want to do on Holy Thursday and Good Friday evenings be more important than spending a little time thinking about what our Lord Jesus went through for our salvation?** Participating in the liturgies of Holy Thursday and Good Friday also deepens our joy when we celebrate the greatest of all feasts, Easter. Please come to our Holy Week services. They are guaranteed sources of graces and blessings.

With my prayers,

Fr. Conley