Holy Week is a time for remembering. We remember the events leading to the Death and Resurrection of Jesus.

On Palm Sunday we remember Jesus’ triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, and on Holy Thursday we recall how he gave himself to us in the Eucharist. On Good Friday we remember how Jesus suffered and died, and at the vigil Mass on Holy Saturday, we celebrate his Resurrection. Through his Death and Resurrection, Jesus redeemed us from our sins.

Prayer

Faithful God, during Holy Week help me remember that you sent your only Son, Jesus, to die for our sins so that we might be redeemed and live a new life.
Redemption Through Jesus

When Jesus was crucified, two criminals were crucified with him. No one knows the names of the criminals or what they had done. They might have been thieves or murderers. They were put on crosses to the left and to the right of Jesus.

As they hung on the crosses, one of the criminals cried out to Jesus, "Aren't you the Messiah? Then save yourself and us." But the other criminal interrupted the first criminal and said, "Have you no fear of God, seeing you are under the same sentence? We deserve it, after all. We are only paying the price for what we've done, but this man has done nothing wrong."

Then the second criminal turned to Jesus and said, "Jesus, remember me when you enter your kingdom." And Jesus replied, "I assure you: This day you will be with me in paradise."

adapted from Luke 23:39–43

Even in the hour of his Death, Jesus repeated his message of Salvation to the good criminal. Even when he was suffering most, Jesus continued to heal. Because the criminal reached out to Jesus in faith and told Jesus that he believed Jesus' message, the criminal's sins were pardoned.

Jesus' message is the same for us as it was for the faithful criminal: If we believe in Jesus' message of Salvation, we will be redeemed from our sins and find eternal life.
The Last Words of Jesus

The Gospel of Luke records some of the last words of Jesus while he was on the cross. These words show us that even in deep suffering, Jesus stayed close to God and remained loving and forgiving.

Read Jesus’ words and think about them. Write answers to the questions.

“Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.” 

*Luke 23:34*

What do these words mean to you?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

“Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” *Luke 23:43*

What do these words mean to you?

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________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” *Luke 23:46*

What do these words mean to you?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Prayer Service

Leader: As we observe Holy Week, let us remember God's message of Salvation.


Reader: Now one of the criminals hanging there spoke snidely to Jesus, saying,

Group A: Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us.

Reader: The other, however, reprimanding him, said in reply,

Group B: Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation. And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received fits our crimes, but this man hasn't committed a crime.

Reader: Then he said,

Group B: Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Reader: Jesus replied to him,

Group A: Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.  

adapted from Luke 23:39-43


All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Leader: Let us pray. Jesus, thank you for always loving and forgiving, for healing us no matter what we have done.

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Leader: Let us live in peace with one another.
Easter

Easter is the time when we remember the events in Jesus’ life that are most important to our faith: his Death on the cross, his Resurrection, and his Ascension into Heaven. We remember these events each time we celebrate Mass.

The events of Holy Week and Easter are truly amazing. Jesus died for our sins, rose from the dead, and ascended into Heaven. These events are difficult to explain. Not even all of the disciples believed that Jesus had risen from the dead, and some of them demanded proof. We can only believe in the Resurrection through faith.

Painted panel of risen Jesus, Norwich Cathedral, Norfolk, England.

Prayer

Faithful God, help me have the faith to believe your promise to us. You sent your only Son, Jesus, who died for our sins on the cross, so that we might have eternal life.
Jesus Is Risen

After Jesus was crucified, his body was placed in a tomb. On the third day, his body was gone. At first nobody understood what had happened. People felt confused. Then the risen Jesus appeared to many who believed in him. Mary Magdalene and the women who went to Jesus’ tomb to prepare his body for burial saw him. So did Peter and many others.

The apostle Thomas, however, was not with the others when they saw Jesus. Later, when Thomas met the others, they excitedly told him the good news: Jesus had risen from the dead and had appeared to them.

Thomas felt surprised and suspicious. He said, “Unless I see the mark of the nails and put my finger into his side, I will not believe.”

A week later, Thomas and the apostles were together in a locked room. Suddenly Jesus appeared to them. Everyone felt surprised, because the door was locked. Jesus greeted everyone and then said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it in my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe.”

Thomas answered Jesus, “My Lord and my God.” Thomas's answer showed that he finally believed. Then Jesus said, “Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.”

adapted from John 20:24–29
Believing God’s Word

Jesus invited Thomas to touch his wounds on his hands and side. Thomas believed and was saved. Jesus makes the same offer to us. With the eyes of faith, we can see the risen Christ present in ourselves and others. Because of our faith, we believe God’s Word and we obtain the Salvation that Jesus won for us on the cross.

Seeing with the Eyes of Faith

When we see with the eyes of faith, we help people who are in need. Our parish community tries to help others. Through various parish ministries, many people bring Holy Communion to people who can’t leave their homes because of illness or who are in hospitals. They bring comfort to families that have lost loved ones, or they provide food and shelter for those in need.

You can help people in these ministries by making them cards of thanks and encouragement. On the front of each card, draw a happy-looking face and the words “You See with the Eyes of Faith.” On the inside write a note thanking them for their service and encouraging them to continue helping others. When you are finished, your cards will be delivered to people in these ministries.
Prayer Service

Leader: Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven. Through love and service, may we deepen our faith in Jesus and his promise of eternal life.

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John. [John 20:24–29]

The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Leader: Knowing that God hears our prayers, let us offer our prayers of petition. The response is Lord, hear our prayer.

For all Catholics, that they may be strengthened in their faith in Jesus and his promise of eternal life, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For those who struggle to believe, that their hearts may become open to Jesus and his saving Word, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, hear these prayers that we speak and the prayers in our hearts. We pray this through Jesus, your Son, and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.
Pentecost

God sent the Holy Spirit to Jesus’ followers on Pentecost. The Holy Spirit gave them the strength and guidance they needed to do God’s work. Because of the Holy Spirit, Christianity spread throughout the world. Today the Holy Spirit continues to guide Catholics as we live out our faith.

Pentecost icon, St. Maron’s Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Prayer

Loving God, thank you for sending us the Holy Spirit that we might have the strength, courage, and guidance to understand and follow your will for us.
A New Follower in Christ

Philip was one of Jesus’ early followers. One day an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, telling him to leave Jerusalem and head out toward the desert. As he traveled he came across a man from Ethiopia.

The Holy Spirit encouraged Philip to approach the man, who was reading the Scriptures. The man began asking Philip questions about the passage he was reading from Isaiah. He asked Philip to explain this Scripture passage:

Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
so he opened not his mouth.
In [his] humiliation justice was denied him.
Who will tell of his posterity?
For his life is taken from the earth.

Philip began talking to the Ethiopian about Jesus. He told him that just like the sheep in Isaiah, Jesus was an innocent victim. Very interested, the Ethiopian asked Philip to get into his chariot so that they could continue to talk as they traveled.

Philip talked more about Jesus. When they came to a stream, the man suddenly asked Philip to baptize him. Philip did so. Prompted by the Holy Spirit, Philip continued his journey, spreading the good news of Jesus. The man resumed his travel back to Ethiopia, rejoicing.

adapted from Acts of the Apostles 8:26–40

Icon (detail) of Philip and the man from Ethiopia, Br. Claude Lane, O.S.B.
Following the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit led Philip to complete an important mission—talk to a person from another country about Jesus. Because Philip paid attention to the Holy Spirit, he accomplished a great thing—he proclaimed Jesus’ message to a new people in another land. How excited Philip must have felt when he realized Jesus’ message was spreading!

The Holy Spirit can lead us to do great things too. He can remind us to help others. He can help us remember to pray for people who are sick. He can help us work hard to be kind to our friends and our brothers and sisters. By being open to the Holy Spirit, we can find out how God wants us to live out our faith and show Jesus’ love to others.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

As Catholics we believe that the Holy Spirit has given us seven special gifts. These are called the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Here is a list of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Beside each gift write an example of a way that you could show it in your life today. For example, you might show the gift of counsel when you decide not to repeat a bad rumor that you overheard.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Wisdom

Understanding

Counsel

Fortitude

Knowledge

Piety

Fear of the Lord
Leader: Let us pray. God our Father, you have sent the Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen us as we follow you. May our hearts remain open to the Spirit. We pray this through Christ our Lord and the Holy Spirit.


The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Leader: Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

All: Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

Group A: Bless and praise the Lord our God. God, you are great indeed!

Group B: How many are your creations, Lord! In wisdom you have made them all.

All: Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

Group A: If you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.

Group B: When you send forth your Spirit, they are given life and you renew the face of the earth.

All: Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

adapted from Psalm 104:1,24,29,30

Leader: Filled with the Spirit, we go to do God's work in the world.

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.