

Pastor's Corner

5th Week of Lent and Holy Week

We just passed the midpoint of Lent, although with the coronavirus in our face, the sense of Lent – penance, suffering, the cross – looks like it will be with us for quite some time.

Our Bulletin Company has asked us to prepare a double bulletin for the 5th Week of Lent and Holy Week, so this is my only Pastor's Corner for the next two weeks.

Holy Week – the most important week of the Church year – will be a shell of its normal self liturgically this year. Because of the coronavirus, we won't have our usual public celebrations during the Week, but I expect to have some kind of services and hope to video them and make them accessible on our website. Stay tuned for further information.

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday (also called Passion Sunday), which recalls Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem with waving palm branches, followed by his rejection, arrest, torture and crucifixion. We will see if we can provide blessed palm leaves for pickup at the church doors.

Holy Thursday recalls Jesus' institution of the priesthood and the Eucharist, and his command of brotherly love through the washing of his disciples' feet. In these days of the suspension of public mass, people mourn the loss of the Eucharist and interaction with the faith community at Mass. Televised Mass is the closest we can come to the eucharistic experience for now.

Good Friday marks the actual day of Jesus' death. At the Passion Service, we listen to the Passion of Jesus according to John and venerate a cross that recalls the cross of Jesus. I will miss seeing the public veneration of the cross, which is one of my favorite liturgical moments of the year, but not possible this year because of social distancing.

On Holy Saturday night, at the Easter Vigil, we remember our salvation history through Scripture, light individual candles from the Paschal Candle, rejoice at Jesus' resurrection, and welcome new members into full communion in the Church. We have several individuals poised to receive the sacraments and await word from the bishop about this.

Because Holy Week is the culmination of our faith, we should plan to participate in as many of the services as we can – even if by television or the Internet.

Holy Week is a time for deep prayer, reflection, penance and mourning over Jesus' death on the cross for our sins, which then leads us to a joyous celebration of His resurrection from the dead. As we continue to deal with the coronavirus, let's ask God to bless our celebration of Holy Week, even if it is different than ever before.

God bless,
Fr. Joe