

Holy Week

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today, Palm Sunday, marks the beginning of Holy Week in which we celebrate the Paschal Mystery – the suffering, death, and resurrection – of Our Savior Jesus Christ in a unique way. Holy Week is the high point of the liturgical year, and it speaks to the heart of our faith. We celebrate our faith in Jesus Christ, who showed us the height of God’s love by emptying himself and dying on the wood of the cross for us. By his death on the cross and rising in glory, Jesus gave us the precious gift of redemption; the gift of new life.

This means that your life and faith in Christ was founded not on Easter Sunday alone, but in the entire course of events of this week; in Jesus’ call to love on Holy Thursday, in his suffering and death on Good Friday, in the uncertainty of Holy Saturday, and in his glorious resurrection on Easter Sunday. It is because of the events of Holy Week that our Christian faith exists. This also means that the mystery of our faith is one Mass that is played out in three separate days (Triduum); Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday; and culminates with the resurrection on Easter Sunday.

As followers of Jesus Christ, let us join in his Passion – his suffering and death – and rise to new life with him. I encourage you to enter this one event that is spread out in the entire weekend not only by yourself but also with your family and friends. Mark your calendar and remind your spouse, children grand-children and great grand-children that it is that time of the year when we need to go to church because someone who loves them so much poured his life out for them.

I also encourage you to actively participate in the liturgies of this week, for there is no greater faith formation, faith enrichment, and catechesis than the liturgies and events of Holy Week.

May the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ bring you peace. I wish you a fruitful Holy Week.

--Fr. Anthony Ahamefule
Parish Priest

Easter Vigil Explained

Easter vigil, which is on Holy Saturday, is the high point of the Triduum. The ceremonies relate to the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the Sacraments of Initiation. It is definitely a celebration to be observed at night.

1. The Service of Light

No lights are in the church; a fire is prepared outside the church or, if this is not possible, inside the vestibule. After greeting the congregation, the priest blesses the new fire, symbolic of Christ’s resurrection, coming forth from the tomb, and giving light to the world. On the Paschal Candle/Easter Candle the priest traces a cross and the numerals of the current year. Finally, the priest lights the candle from the new fire, lifts the Paschal Candle and sings *Christ our Light*.

After walking halfway into the church, he sings the same acclamation, after which the people light their candles from the Easter Candle. Upon arriving at the altar, the acclamation is sung for a third time, and the lights in the church are put on. Immediately thereafter follows the *Exsultet*, the Easter Proclamation, sung while all stand and hold lighted candles. It honors the night on which Christ redeemed us.

2. Liturgy of the Word

For this vigil, seven readings are provided from the Old Testament and two from the New Testament. For pastoral reasons, here at Holy Trinity, we will have three from the Old Testament and two from the New. The readings deal with creation, Abraham’s sacrifice, the passage through the Red Sea, the new Jerusalem, salvation offered to all, the fountain of wisdom, and a new heart and a new spirit.

Holy Week

The people sing the responses and answer *Amen* after each prayer. After the last reading from the Old Testament, the candles on the altar are lit, Glory to God is sung and the bells are rung. The priest then says the Opening Prayer for the Mass, which is followed by the Epistle, the Alleluia, the Gospel and concludes with the Homily.

3. Liturgy of Baptism

Usually, the elect to be baptized are called forward at this time as ministers go to the baptismal font. The two elect from our parish are Jimmy Upton and Anthony Ornelas. The elect will come up to the sanctuary with their godparents and face the people. The priest, having introduced the celebration, invites the choir to lead the people in singing the Litany of the Saints. He then blesses the baptismal water. The elect are anointed with the Oil of Catechumen, then renounce the devil, profess their faith in God, and are baptized. Since Anthony Ornelas is still a child, he will be anointed with Chrism Oil right away as part of his baptism, while Jimmy Upton, as an adult, will proceed to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Immediately after Confirmation, everyone will stand with lighted candles and renew our baptismal profession of faith. The priest then sprinkles all present with the blessed baptismal water, sometimes called Easter Water. The usual Profession of Faith is omitted, and the Prayers of the Faithful follow immediately.

4. Liturgy of the Eucharist

Mass resumes with the Preparation of the Gifts, which are brought forward by the newly baptized. The rest of the Mass continues as usual, but with the addition of two Alleluias following the dismissal.