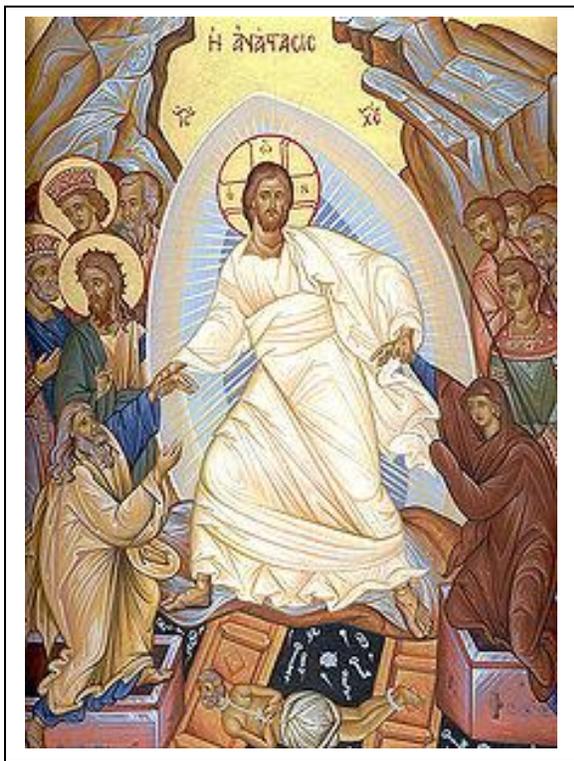


HOLY WEEK

REFLECTION GUIDE



“The Church does not pretend, as it were, that it does not know what will happen with the crucified Jesus. It does not sorrow and mourn over the Lord as if the Church itself were not the very creation which has been produced from His wounded side and from the depths of His tomb. All through the Holy Week services the victory of Christ is contemplated and the resurrection is proclaimed.”

Thomas Hopko

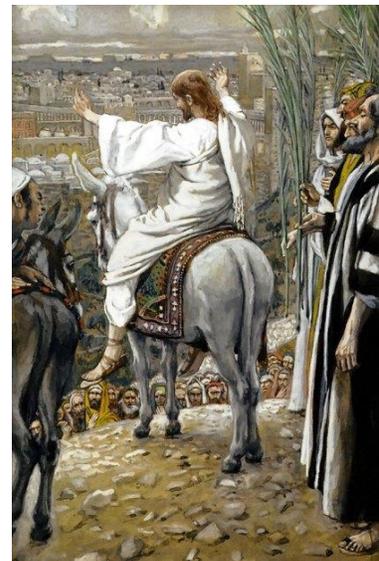
God has taken us out of the power of darkness and created a place for us in the kingdom of the Son that He loves, and in Him, we gain our freedom, the forgiveness of our sins.

(Col 1:13-14)

PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

Our Church loves to celebrate the central moments of our faith as a family—and the central events of our Christian faith, the events that MAKE us Christian, are the death and resurrection of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Every year, we honor the anniversary of these events through an extended celebration that begins with Palm Sunday and takes us through the great Sacred Triduum of the Church's Year: the liturgies of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday.

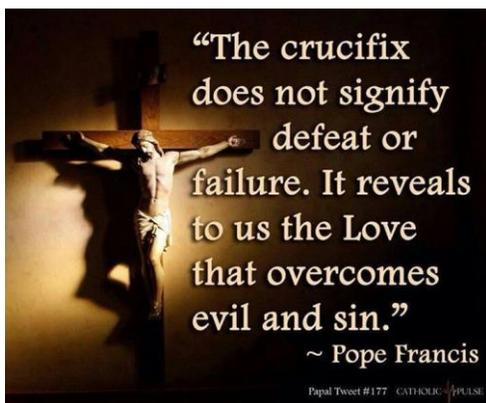
On Palm Sunday, we gather to commemorate the Lord's entrance into Jerusalem before His Passion. He enters as the rightful King, the Son of David. He comes as the long-awaited Messiah, ready to offer Himself as the once-for-all sacrifice of redemption and atonement for the sins of all. Jesus comes to face and overcome all the manifestations of evil, sin and death that are present in our sin-sickened world. He comes to fight and vanquish, but with the power of love—and this power does not meet violence with violence, or hatred with hate. This power comes in "weakness" and humility—yet it is the power that has broken open the gates of hell that imprisoned us and opened the halls of heaven that will welcome us. Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem sets into motion the events of Holy Week—the events of our redemption.



PALM BRANCHES

The palms we carry have been blessed and represent our dreams for peace and prosperity. The palm branches are carried from Mass into our homes—there they will stay until we bring them back to the church to be burnt down into the ashes we will receive next Ash Wednesday.

THE PASSION OF OUR LORD



Our Gospel on Palm Sunday is the Passion of Our Lord as told by one of the three synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark or Luke). We take on the part of the crowd, immersing ourselves in the story that is, truly, our story. We admit that we, too, fail in our courage and commitment to Christ—that in our choices to sin and to disobey, we are more like the crowds shouting for his death than we want to admit.

Collect for Palm Sunday

Almighty ever-living God, who as an example of humility for the human race to follow caused our Savior to take flesh and submit to the Cross, graciously grant that we may heed his lesson of patient suffering and so merit a share in his Resurrection. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Prayer Over the Offerings for Palm Sunday

Through the Passion of your Only Begotten Son, O Lord, may our reconciliation with you be near at hand, so that, though we do not merit it by our own deeds, yet by this sacrifice made once for all, we may feel already the effects of your mercy. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Reflection Questions for Palm Sunday

1. Read Philippians 2:6-11, the Second Reading for Palm Sunday. In it, Jesus' humility is described. Paul pleads with us to imitate Christ in his humility and desire to serve. How do you define humility and why is it considered so essential to the life of a Christian?
2. The Palm Sunday Procession recalls the excitement and joy of the crowd as they witness Jesus entering Jerusalem as their Messiah and King. Many of these people were probably part of the crowd later that week who screamed for Jesus' crucifixion and death. How does this turn around speak to you about the dangers and temptations we face in our discipleship?
3. Reread the account of Jesus' Passion in Mark's Gospel (Mark 14:1-15:47). Mark's account emphasizes the raw emotion of Jesus' Passion. Mark is recording the Passion as told to him by St. Peter. How does the emotion of the story draw you deeper into what Jesus suffered and why He chose to undergo it all? Mark emphasizes the abandonment and desolation of Jesus—how does this speak to the reality of the nature of sin?

THE TRIDUUM

- The word means “three days”
- The Triduum begins Holy Thursday evening and concludes with evening prayer on Easter Sunday—we count the days from nightfall to nightfall (which is how we get 3, not 4!)
- The Triduum is ONE celebration spread over 3 days—it is our lengthened liturgical celebration of the events of the Paschal Mystery: the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- It is the high point of the entire liturgical year—all our liturgies point to this moment and gain their energy from it

“Christ redeemed us all and gave perfect glory to God principally through his paschal mystery: dying he destroyed death and rising he restored our life. Therefore the Easter Triduum of the passion and resurrection of Christ is the **culmination of the entire liturgical year**. The Easter Triduum begins with the evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper (on Holy Thursday), reaches its high point in the Easter Vigil, and closes with evening prayer on Easter Sunday. On Good Friday and, if possible, also on Holy Saturday until the Easter Vigil, the Easter fast is to be observed everywhere.”



General Norms for the Liturgical Year, nos. 18-19

Thus does the Church’s calendar speak of these Three Days. Lent ends on Holy Thursday. Friday and Saturday are days of private and communal prayer, of strict fasting from food and work and entertainment. This is in anticipation of the great Vigil when the catechumens at last are baptized, confirmed, and join in the Eucharistic banquet. This fasting from food and work and entertainment is not sad and penitential. It is rather a fasting of eager excitement as we approach the Vigil with its Scriptures, the baptism, the renewal of our Passover. Thus are the death and resurrection of Christ proclaimed in our midst. At various moments from Thursday evening until Sunday, the community gathers for prayer and vigil: each parish community together keeps these holy days.

HOLY THURSDAY

Lent ends quietly on this evening as we move into the great Three Days that are called "Passover" or "Easter." The liturgy of this night proclaims that we find glory in the cross: this mystery gathers us to watch and pray from now until Easter Sunday. We enter the Triduum in a peculiar way: washing feet, letting our feet be washed. After the evening liturgy, it is customary to spend time in prayer. Thus begins the watching and praying of these Three Days. Among the Scriptures that are appropriate for reading and reflection are John, chapters 14-17; Psalm 22; and the Book of Lamentations.

The Washing of the Feet (John 13:1-15)



Jesus, come, my feet are dirty. You have become a servant for my sake, so fill your basin with water; come, wash my feet. I know that I am bold in saying this, but your own words have made me fearful: "If I do not wash your feet, you will have no companionship with me." Wash my feet, then, so that I may be your companion.

Origen, 3rd century

The Institution of the Eucharist (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

I received from the Lord what I handed on to you, namely, that the Lord Jesus on the night in which he was betrayed took bread, and after he had given thanks, broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after the supper, he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' Every time, then, you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

"Do you understand, then, what good Christ gives us all to eat? By one and the same food, we are both brought into being and nourished. As a woman nourishes her child with her own blood and milk, so does Christ unceasingly nourish with his own blood those to whom he himself has given life."

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

Collect, Holy Thursday Mass

O God, who have called us to participate in this most sacred Supper, in which your Only Begotten Son, when about to hand himself over to death, entrusted to the Church a sacrifice new for all eternity, the banquet of his love, grant, we pray, that we may draw from so great a mystery, the fullness of charity and of life. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Readings at Holy Thursday Mass:

***“We should glory in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,
in whom is our salvation, life and resurrection,
through whom we are saved and delivered.”***

Entrance Antiphon

First Reading: Exodus 12:1-8,11-14

We hear the instructions given to the enslaved Hebrews in Egypt for how to celebrate the Passover of the Lord. This meal would commemorate, for all generations, how the angel of the Lord passed over the houses marked with the Lamb’s blood, bringing them freedom from slavery.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 116

Our blessing cup is a communion with the Blood of Christ.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

We hear Paul’s description of the Last Supper—the words of consecration used by Jesus about the bread and the wine.

Gospel Reading: John 13:1-15

We hear the story of how Jesus, before he celebrates the Last Supper with his apostles, washes their feet as a sign to them of his love. He commands them to do for each other what he has done for each of them—“I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do”

***“This is the Body that will be given up for you;
This is the Chalice of the new covenant in my Blood says the Lord;
do this, whenever you receive it, in memory of me.”***

Communion Antiphon

*By this light
I shall come to know
that you, eternal Trinity,
are table and food
and waiter for us.
You, eternal Father,
are the table that offers us
as food the Lamb,
your only-Begotten Son.
He is the most exquisite of food
for us, both in his teaching,
which nourishes us in your will,
and in the Sacrament that we
receive in Holy Communion,
which feeds and strengthens us
while we are pilgrim
travelers in this life.
And the Holy Spirit
is indeed a waiter for us,
for he serves us this teaching by
enlightening our
mind’s eye with it
and inspiring us to follow it.
Catherine of Siena, 14th c.*

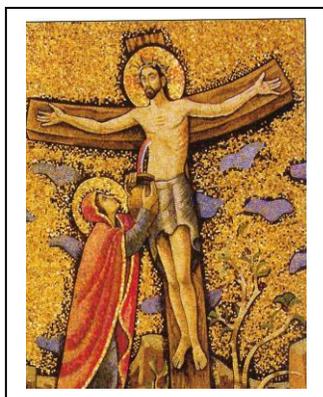
Reflection Questions for Holy Thursday

1. Read John 13:1-15 carefully and at least two times, pausing for prayer in between each reading. In order to celebrate the Eucharist, the great sacrament of unity, of HOLY communion, we must be willing to wash each other's feet. What are the actions and attitudes that 'wash each other's feet'? Who needs you to 'wash their feet'? How will you respond?
2. The Eucharist celebrates true union with Jesus Christ and with the Body of Christ, the Church. We pledge to live in covenant with one another. A covenant involves lifelong promises to live in sacrificial love. How would you describe the covenant made between you and God? How would you describe the covenant made between you and the Body of Christ, His Church? In what ways are you conscious of fulfilling your covenant promises? Which covenant promises are you struggling with right now?
3. Recall the Last Supper. Read Luke's account (Luke 22:7-20) and Paul's account (1 Corinthians 11:23-27). Jesus uses language of sacrifice in explaining why we are to receive His body and blood. How do you make sense of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ—what did He offer, why did He offer it and what was the result? What kinds of sacrifices do you offer in Jesus' name—and what, exactly, do you believe Jesus wants you to sacrifice?
4. We believe at Mass that we are nourished by the Word of God in the Scriptures and the Word of God (Jesus) in the Sacrament of the Eucharist—the Mass offers us two 'tables' from which we receive: the table of the word and the table of the Eucharist. What does it mean to you to receive Jesus Christ in word and Sacrament? What do you hunger for and how do these 'tables' satisfy your hunger? What do you take with you from these tables out into the world as Mass ends?

GOOD FRIDAY

Today and tomorrow the Church takes on the Paschal Fast, the Easter Fast. This is not a fast of penance but of anticipation. It is fasting like the fasting of a bride or groom before the wedding, a fasting of excitement when we are so filled with anticipation that we cannot eat. We fast also from work and from all the usual distractions. Minds and hearts grow hungry for God's word.

Our lives are filled instead with the mystery of Jesus' death and resurrection, with how we ourselves take on that dying and rising, little by little becoming images of Christ in this world. On Friday afternoon or evening, the parish community gathers together. According to the Church's ancient tradition, Mass is not celebrated today anywhere throughout the world. The celebration on this day consists of three parts: Liturgy of the Word, Adoration of the Cross, and Holy Communion.



The Passion of Jesus Christ (John 18:1-19:42)

You love humankind, O Christ, and I glorify you for that. You are the only Son, the Lord of all things. You alone are without sin. You gave yourself up to death for me, an unworthy sinner, the death of the cross. Through this suffering, you have delivered all human beings from the snares of evil. What shall I render to you, Lord, for such goodness?

Ephraem, 4th century

The Adoration of the Cross

How splendid the cross of Christ! It brings life, not death; light not darkness; Paradise, not its loss. It is the wood on which the Lord, like a great warrior, was wounded in hands and feet and side, but healed thereby our wounds. A tree had destroyed us, a tree now brings us life.

Theodore of Studios, 9th century

"The mercy of Christ is not a cheap grace; it does not presume a trivialization of evil. Christ carries in his body and on his soul all the weight of evil, and all its destructive force. He burns and transforms evil through suffering, in the fire of his suffering love."

Pope Benedict XVI

Good Friday Liturgy Prayer:

O God, who by the Passion of Christ your Son, our Lord, abolished the death inherited from ancient sin by every succeeding generation, grant that just as, being conformed to him, we have borne by the law of nature the image of the man of earth, so by the sanctification of grace we may bear the image of the Man of heaven. Through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Readings at Good Friday Liturgy:

First Reading: Isaiah 52:13-53:12

This “Fourth Song of the Suffering Servant” in Isaiah is an incredible prophecy of Jesus. Not only does this beautiful song describe what Christ will suffer—it also explains why he will suffer: “by his stripes we were healed ... their guilt he will bear.”

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 31

Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.

Second Reading: Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9

We can trust in Jesus’ compassionate treatment—he himself endured temptation and sympathizes with our weaknesses. He is the source of salvation for all who obey him.

Gospel Reading: John 18:1-19:42

The story of Jesus’ passion in the Gospel of John emphasizes the glory that Jesus won through his obedience and self-surrender. Even in the midst of His apparent defeat, Jesus proves victorious over sin, evil and death. From the wounded side of Christ, blood and water flowed—the birth of the Church in the waters of baptism and the blood of the Eucharistic meal.

*Solemn Intercessions conclude the Liturgy of the Word—
in this extended version of our regular prayers of the faithful,
we join with Christ in making intercession for all people:*

- *For Holy Church*
- *For the Pope*
- *For all orders and degrees of the faithful*
 - *For catechumens*
 - *For the unity of Christians*
 - *For the Jewish People*
- *For those who do not believe in Christ*
- *For those who do not believe in God*
 - *For those in public office*
 - *For those in tribulation*

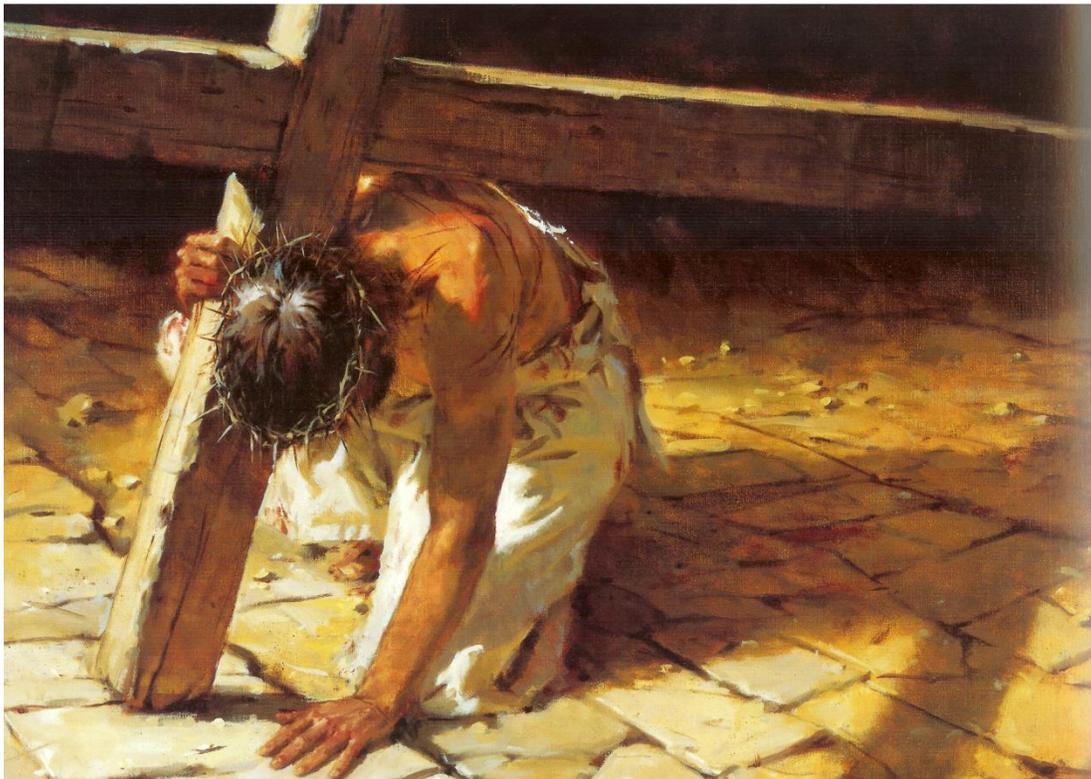
*Let us exalt our minds,
kindle our hearts;
let us not quench our spirits,
but let us be uplifted in soul
and hasten near by
to suffer with the one
incapable of suffering.
Let us lay aside
all tiresome arguments
and attach ourselves
to the one on the cross.
If it seems right,
let us all go along with Peter
to the house of Caiaphas,
and with him let us cry to Christ
the words of Peter long ago—
“Even if he goes to the cross and
enters the tomb—
We suffer with you,
and we shall die with you
and cry: ‘Hasten, Holy One,
save your sheep.’”
Romanos, 9th c.*

Reflection Questions for Good Friday

1. On Good Friday we stop to honor the sacrifice made for us—we pause and dwell on the unthinkable and linger at a place of such sorrow and remorse. Yet we stay there to immerse ourselves in the mystery of sacrificial love. How do you stay mindful of the price paid for your soul—and how do you respond to the One who offered this sacrifice for you? How do you imitate Jesus' sacrificial love in your life?
2. Jesus' death on the cross is referred to as the "Passion" of Christ. What is Christ so passionate about? How does Jesus show passion when He is so 'passive' in allowing evil and ignorance to have their way with Him? What does Jesus' passion teach you about your passionate response to God's love and God's will?
3. Jesus' last words on the Cross have been sources of deep and fruitful reflections by many spiritual writers. Spend some time praying with these last statements of Jesus: "Father, forgive them," "I thirst," "This day you will be with me in paradise," "This is your Mother," "It is finished," "God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" "Into your hands I commend my Spirit." What have you come to recognize, appreciate or wonder about the Passion of Jesus?
4. Jesus' death on the cross represents the Son of God's supreme act of obedience to the will of the Father. All God asks of us is to LET GO—to obey God so as to gain the freedom of living in His love. This is the fundamental expression of the Son's love for the Father: "Not my will, but your will be done." How do you describe the spiritual state of obedience, of releasing one's will to God's? How do you express obedience to God's will in your life?

“He would let the world do its will and thereby accomplish the will of the Father; he would grant the world its will, thereby breaking the world’s will; he would allow his own vessel to be shattered, thereby pouring himself out; but by pouring out one single drop of the divine Heart’s blood he would sweeten the immense and bitter ocean. This was intended to be the most incomprehensible of exchanges: from the most extreme opposition would come the highest union, and the might of his supreme victory was to prove itself in utter disgrace and defeat. For his weakness would already be the victory of his love for the Father, reconciliation in the eyes of the Father, and, as a deed of his supreme strength, this weakness would be so great that it would far surpass and sustain in itself the world’s pitiful feebleness. He alone would henceforth be the measure and thus also the meaning of impotence. He wanted to sink so low that in the future all falling would be a falling into him, and every streamlet of bitterness and despair would henceforth run down into his lowermost abyss.”

Hans Urs von Balthasar



HOLY SATURDAY

The Church puts aside work and food to continue watching and praying. The Church gathers this night hungry for God's word. We keep vigil, listening to the Scriptures unfold their stories of creation and liberation, their prophecies of God's bounty and love, their demand that we acknowledge our baptism into the death of Christ. We sing again the alleluia, and the Gospel of Christ's resurrection is heard. Only then does the Church call on all the saints and process to the baptismal font. There our catechumens, the elect, reject evil and profess their faith in Father, Son and Spirit. They are baptized and then anointed with chrism. The whole Church rejoices. New Christians and old then join in the Eucharist.

The Easter Fire and the Exultet



We begin our vigil celebration gathered around the Easter fire—and from its flames we light the new Easter candle that will reside within our church, lit at every baptism and funeral in the coming year. We process into a dark church, sharing the light of the Easter candle as we slowly fill in the church with our presence and the light of Christ. The exulted is proclaimed in our midst—the ancient hymn of victory. We wonder at the mercy and love shown to us by our God: *“Father, how wonderful your care for us! How boundless your merciful love! To ransom a slave you gave away your Son.”*

The Sacraments of Initiation

Those who have been baptized receive the anointing, the impress of the sign of the saving cross of the only-begotten Son. By this cross Satan and every hostile power have been defeated and are led captive in the triumphal procession. Regenerated and renewed by the bath of the new birth, let these here also share in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Let them live to the very end in faith and the knowledge of the truth, in expectation of the hope of heavenly life and of the eternal promises of the Lord...

Serapion, 4th century

“We need the living God who loved us to the point of death.”

Pope Benedict XVI, 1/23/06

Collect, Easter Vigil Liturgy

O God, who make this most sacred night radiant with the glory of the Lord's Resurrection, stir up in your Church a spirit of adoption, so that, renewed in body and mind, we may render you undivided service. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Readings at the Easter Vigil:

There are seven readings from the Old Testament and two from the New (the Epistle and the Gospel), all of which should be read whenever this can be done. Each Old Testament reading has a corresponding Responsorial Psalm and Prayer.

The Old Testament Readings are:

Creation (Gen 1:1:2:2)
Abraham's Sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22:1-18)
The Victory at the Red Sea (Exodus 14:15-15:1)
The Prophet Isaiah speaks of God's merciful love (54:5-14)
The Prophet Isaiah speaks of God's eternal covenant (55:1-11)
The Prophet Baruch speaks of wisdom (3:9-15,32-4:4)
The Prophet Ezekiel speaks of new life (36:16-17a,18-28)

Epistle: Romans 6:3-11

We are instructed about the nature of Baptism—that we join in Christ's death in the tomb in order to rise to new life with. We live a new life in Christ, dead to sin, alive in Christ Jesus.

Gospel Reading: Mark 16:1-7

Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome go to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body. They find the tomb empty and an angel declares that Jesus has been raised from the dead. The women proclaim the good news to the apostles.

The Sacraments of Initiation are celebrated after the Homily. The elect receive the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and will join in Holy Communion with the entire assembly.

What will you be asked to claim, each of you, as you stand before the Church and before your God? "I renounce you, Satan, and confess my belief in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit!" With your confession, you will assert, "Henceforth, I am no longer in Satan's power. For Christ destroyed that power by sharing with me a nature of flesh and blood. He destroyed death by dying; never again shall I be enslaved by what is not God! I renounce evil in all its forms! I renounce idolatry of wealth, power, prestige! St. Cyril of Jerusalem, 4th c.

"Christ yesterday and today... the Beginning and the End... the Alpha... and the Omega... All time belongs to him... and all the ages... To him be glory and power... through every age and for ever. Amen."

Words spoken as the Priest prepares the Easter Candle to be lit from the Easter fire

Reflection Questions for Holy Saturday

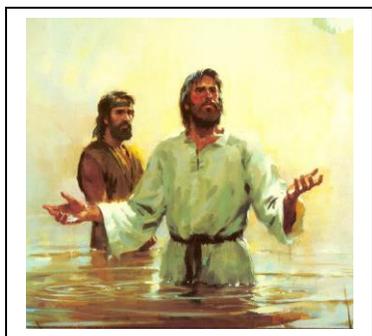
1. During Holy Saturday, we offer to God the supreme Sabbath day of rest. As Jesus rested in the tomb on the Sabbath, we are asked to rest as well. What can you put aside this day to make of it (at least partly) a day of rest?
2. We gather as it grows dark to wait for the Light of Christ to burst forth in the world—as Christ’s light exploded into the early morning darkness, we too are called to be lights of Christ even during dark moments. When have you allowed the light of Christ to shine through you for someone else? When has someone shown you the light of Christ in your life?
3. A vigil is a time of expectant waiting. How would you describe what it is you are waiting for, hoping for, expecting?
4. The foundation of our Easter Vigil celebration is to hear some of the key moments of salvation history in our Mass—God’s creation, covenant, and saving actions for His beloved people. Choose two or three of the Old Testament readings. What do these readings declare to you about Jesus’ death and resurrection, and about your response in faith?

EASTER SUNDAY

The Three Days continue until the evening of Sunday. And at the same time, the Church begins the Fifty Days, the time of rejoicing between Easter and Pentecost. Easter is not simply one feast among others, but the “Feast of feasts,” the “Solemnity of solemnities,” just as the Eucharist is the “Sacrament of sacraments.” St. Athanasius calls Easter “the Great Sunday” and the Eastern Churches call Holy Week “the Great Week.” The mystery of the Resurrection, in which Christ crushed death, permeates with its powerful energy our old time, until all is subjected to him.

After the fasting of Lent and the Easter Fast from Thursday night until the Vigil, the foods of Easter have a special place. The foods to be shared in the feast should be blessed with joy and gratitude.

Solemn Renewal of Baptismal Promises



Dear brothers and sisters, through the Paschal Mystery we have been buried with Christ in Baptism, so that we may walk with him in newness of life. And so, now that our Lenten observance is concluded, let us renew the promises of Holy Baptism, by which we once renounced Satan and his works and promised to serve God in the holy Catholic Church.

Renewal of Baptismal Promises, Roman Rite

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Christians, praise the paschal victim! Offer thankful sacrifice! Christ the lamb has saved the sheep, Christ the just one paid the price, Reconciling sinners to the Father. Death and life fought bitterly for this wondrous victory; the Lord of life who died reigns glorified! O Mary, come and say what you saw at break of day. “The empty tomb of my living Lord! I saw Christ Jesus risen and adored! Bright angels testified, shroud and grave clothes side by side! Yes, Christ my hope rose gloriously. He goes before you into Galilee.” Share the good news, sing joyfully: His death is victory! Lord Jesus, victor King, show us mercy. Amen.

Easter sequence, Roman rite; 11th century

Collect, Easter Sunday Liturgy

O God, who on this day, through your Only Begotten Son, have conquered death and unlocked for us the path to eternity, grant, we pray, that we who keep the solemnity of the Lord's Resurrection may, through the renewal brought by your Spirit, rise up in the light of life. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Readings for Easter Sunday Mass:

***"I have risen, and I am with you still, alleluia.
You have laid your hand upon me, alleluia.
Too wonderful for me, this knowledge, alleluia, alleluia."***

Entrance Antiphon

First Reading: Acts of the Apostles 10:34a,37-43

We hear St. Peter give a speech in which he declares the Good News of Jesus Christ: his death and resurrection. St. Peter announces that all who believe in Jesus will receive forgiveness of sins.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 118

This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.

Second Reading: Colossians 3:1-4

St. Paul challenges us that if we believe that Jesus is risen from the dead, then our lives should change: we should live in the truth that heaven is our eternal home. Jesus is the source of life for us, and we will share in his glory.

Gospel Reading: John 20:1-9

This account from John's Gospel tells of the journey Peter and John took to the tomb—how they raced to Jesus' burial place after Mary Magdalene announced his resurrection. Both saw the empty tomb and the burial cloths—John says that "he saw and believed."

***"Christ our Passover has been sacrificed, alleluia;
Therefore let us keep the feast with the unleavened bread
of purity and truth, alleluia, alleluia."***

Communion Antiphon

*Join then, all of you, join in our
Master's rejoicing. You who
were the first to come, you who
came after, come and collect
now your wages. The rich and
the poor, sing and dance
together. You that are hard on
yourselves, you that are easy,
honor this day. You that have
fasted and you that have not,
make merry today. The meal is
ready: come and enjoy it. The
calf is a fat one: you will not go
hungry away. There's kindness
for all to partake of and kindness
to spare. Away with pleadings of
poverty: the kingdom belongs to
all. Away with bewailings of
failings: forgiveness has come
from the grave. Away with your
fears of dying: the death of our
Savior has freed us from fear.
Death played the master: He has
mastered death.
Paschal homily, 4th c.*

Reflection Questions for Easter Sunday

1. Easter is the confirmation of all that Jesus Christ promises to us—a day to rejoice in the truth of who Jesus is and who He invites us become. How can you make this day a celebration of the truths of your faith? What traditions or events can you incorporate? Is there anything that needs to be taken out of your day or re-focused?
2. St. Paul argues that if Christ was not raised from the dead, our faith as Christians is in vain. Christ, first risen, has gone before us to show us the way to eternal life. How in your life have you witnessed the power and promise of the Risen Lord? Of eternal life in heaven?
3. The newly baptized are called “neophytes”—a word that means “new life” or “new light.” How can you bring new life and light to your family, your friends and your community after this Easter celebration? What does the new life/light of your renewed baptismal covenant promise to you?
4. We celebrate Easter for 50 days—the mystery of God’s love and victory is too great to contemplate for just one day! How can you keep the season of Easter as a time of rejoicing and celebrating? Are there some simple, yet meaningful, actions/prayers that you could use each day?

THE SEASON OF EASTER

*Easter is the Feast of feasts, the Solemnity of solemnities. It begins the season of Easter. The fifty days from the Sunday of the Resurrection to **Pentecost Sunday** are celebrated in joy and exultation as one feast day, indeed, as one “great Sunday.” There are the days above all others in which the Alleluia is sung. The first eight days of Easter Time constitute the **Octave of Easter** and are celebrated as Solemnities of the Lord. On the fortieth day after Easter the **Ascension of the Lord** is celebrated, except where, not being observed as a Holyday of Obligation, is has been assigned to the Seventh Sunday of Easter (which is the case in the United States). The weekdays from the Ascension up to and including the Saturday before Pentecost prepare for the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete. This outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and the Church is celebrated at Pentecost. The Easter Season concludes with evening prayer on Pentecost.*

from General Norms on the Liturgical Year, #'s 22-26

Come, O Holy Spirit, Come



Come, O Holy Spirit, come! And from your celestial home, shed a ray of light divine! You, of comforters the best; You, the soul's most welcome guest; Sweet refreshment here below; O most blessed Light divine, Shine within these hearts of yours, And our inmost being fill! Come, O Father of the poor! Come, source of all our store! Come, within our bosoms shine! In our labor, rest most sweet; Grateful coolness in the heat; solace in the midst of woe. Where you are not, we have naught, Nothing good in deed of thought, Nothing free from taint of ill.

Sequence, sung at Mass on Pentecost

God's love poured out in our hearts...

The Holy Spirit ... is the soul of the Church, the love which binds us to the Lord and one another, and the light which opens our eyes to see all around us the wonders of God's grace. May the fire of God's love descend to fill your hearts, unite you ever more fully to the Lord and his church, and send you forth, a new generation of apostles, to bring the world to Christ!

Pope Benedict XVI, 7/20/2008

Who are we as an Easter People?

I am part of the **Fellowship of the Unashamed.**

The die has been cast. The decision has been made. I have stepped over the line. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away or be still.

My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, and my future is in God's hands. I am finished and done with low living, sight walking, small planning, the bare minimum, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, mundane talking, frivolous living, selfish giving, and dwarfed goals.

I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, applause, or popularity. I don't have to be right, first, the best, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by faith. I lean on Christ's presence. I love with patience, live by prayer, and labor with the power of God's grace.

My face is set. My gait is fast, my goal is heaven. My road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions are few, my Guide is reliable, and my mission is clear.

I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded, or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of adversity, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won't give up, shut up, let up, or slow up until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up and spoken up for the cause of Christ.

I am a disciple of Jesus. I must go till he comes, give until I drop, speak out until all know, and work until he stops me.

And when he returns for his own, he will have no difficulty recognizing me. My banner is clear: I am a part of the Fellowship of the Unashamed.

Patrick Madrid

