

March 28, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today we remember Jesus traveling triumphantly down the Mount of Olives across the Kidron Valley on a donkey fulfilling the scripture passage that said the Messiah would ride on the foal of an ass to the shout of "Hosanna". Jesus entered Jerusalem through the Golden Gate of the City, the gate entrance reserved for kings. Our Jewish friends believe that when the Messiah comes in glory at the Resurrection of the Dead, he will also enter through the Golden Gate of the City. We Christians believe that has already happened on Palm Sunday nearly 2,000 years ago. Just a few short days later, Jesus went back to the Mount of Olives. This time He spent the night in prayer asking His Father to strengthen Him as He faced His impending death the next day on Good Friday. May the Father strengthen all of us with the grace of His Son as we make our pilgrimage with Jesus to Jerusalem in our liturgies, penances, and daily prayers throughout this week!

Gratefully, we have arrived at another Holy Week. Unlike our most sorrowful Holy Week ever, last year, when we were separated completely from physically being present at the Liturgies of Holy Week, this year we are able to celebrate in person. Thanks be to God! May we never take our Catholic Faith or the Sacraments for granted again. We never know what will happen in the future. Jesus, forgive us for not putting you first at some points in our lives. You gave everything for us. Help us never to put you, our Faith, or the practice of our Faith in second place. We encourage all to consider coming to church for the most solemn celebrations of our church year. We particularly recommend the outdoor Mass of the Lord's Supper on Thursday at 7 pm and the Easter Sunday 9 am outdoor drive-in Mass at SMV. We encourage all to attend the outdoor Easter Sunday Mass so that we can accommodate better those who must come to indoor Masses on Easter Sunday.

Good Friday is a Day of Fast and Abstinence. Please remember to keep the fasting of Good Friday if you are 18-60 years of age and to also abstain from meat and food made with meat if you are 14 and older. Also, we encourage everyone to persevere with your other Lenten Penances until Easter Sunday begins with the Easter Vigil Mass. For a full description of the precept of fasting and of abstinence, please see the article in the body of this bulletin.

Please remember to make a good Confession if you have not. We are asked to confess our sins in the Sacrament of Penance at least once a year during the Lent and Easter Season or whenever necessary. We have once again included a pamphlet for examining your conscience before going to confession as an aid to prepare. Many have already received God's mercy in the Sacrament the past few weeks but many have not yet had the opportunity. Please note that Fr. John Bosco, Hospital Chaplain from Grand Rapids, will be at St. Mary's on two occasions during Holy Week as indicated on the schedule for Confessions inserted in the bulletin today. Many times people like to go to confession with a visiting priest and we wanted to be sure everyone has that opportunity. However, your own priests love to celebrate Confession with you and are available also at multiple times this coming week. Let's all experience a Resurrection from sin and darkness with Jesus and we are renewed in the graces of our Baptism through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Please keep the Triduum (Holy Thursday- Easter Sunday) holy if you are home or away during the Easter vacation time. We know that many families are itching to get away after being on lock-down for so long. Please enjoy yourselves! However, please also keep the holiest days of our year in a spirit of prayer, penance, quiet, and if possible, participation in the Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Liturgies. Wherever you may be, at minimum, please keep Good Friday and Easter Sunday set aside for Jesus! It is so important to pass these most important traditions of our Faith to our children and grandchildren. If we do not teach them, who will?

Looking ahead to Divine Mercy Sunday, a week from Easter Sunday, we begin 40-Hours of Eucharistic Devotion at SMV during this special Year of St. Joseph. Please plan to spend some time in prayer with Jesus truly present in the Blessed Sacrament sometime between Sunday, April 11 and Tuesday April 13.

A full schedule for Holy Week, Easter, and Confession times is inserted in this bulletin for your reference. Please know that the more we enter into this week in a spirit of prayer, setting aside the distractions of the world around us to be with Christ through His Passion, the more God's peace and grace will be with us throughout the year. May St. Joseph and Mary spiritually accompany us as we walk with Jesus to the Cross, and Rise with Him through the Grace of the Sacraments on Easter Sunday morning!

In the Passion of Our Savior,
Fr. Derda, Fr. Steve, Deacon Russ & Deacon Ed