

PASTOR'S COLUMN

Peeking Ahead to Holy Week

Believe it or not, this coming Thursday marks the midpoint of Lent. Lent is rolling along. Are we being faithful to our Lenten prayer, penance and almsgiving? If not, there's still time to recommit and finish strong in the second half of the season. And it's most definitely not too early to peek ahead to Holy Week.

Holy Week is the culmination of the Lenten journey. Liturgically, it's where all the prayer, penance and almsgiving are leading us. Holy Week is an intense liturgical celebration of the great mysteries of our salvation.

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. At the end of Holy Week, we celebrate the Triduum or great "Three Days" of our faith – Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil.

On Holy Thursday, we remember Jesus' institution of the priesthood and the Eucharist, and his command of brotherly love through the washing of his disciples' feet. On Good Friday, we mark the actual day of Jesus' death, listening to the Passion of Jesus according to John and venerating a cross that recalls the cross of Jesus. On Holy Saturday night, at the Easter Vigil, we remember the story of our salvation history through Scripture, light individual candles from the Paschal Candle representing Jesus, rejoice at Jesus' resurrection, and welcome new members into the Church through the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. On Easter Sunday, we proclaim Jesus' resurrection from the dead and our redemption with great fanfare and joy.

Because Holy Week is the culmination of the Season of Lent and includes the greatest liturgical celebrations of our faith, we should circle Holy Week on our calendar and plan to participate in as many of the services as we can. We need to reject the secular notion that Holy Week is a time for holiday and Good Friday is time for a family crawfish boil. Rather, these are days for deep prayer, reflection, fasting and mourning over Jesus' death on the cross for our sins, which then leads us to a joyous celebration of Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

At the midpoint of Lent, we remember the reason for the Lenten Season, prepare ourselves for the coming Feast Days of our redemption, and pray for an abundant outpouring of God's grace in the second half of Lent.

God bless,
Fr. Joe