

Sunday, Apr 14, 2019

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

Hats off to Jesus' message

Imagine a baseball-cap seller in the first century. Further imagine the catchy phrases on the brim of his wares: "The last will be first." "Let me wash your feet." "Love your enemies." "Bless those who hurt you." "Be like the children." "Feed my sheep." "Take up your cross." "The humble will be exalted." "Blessed are the meek." Who's going to buy this misguided fellow's hats? The rest of us want to boast, not bow. This guy doesn't get it. He needs to get into another line of work. Would you wear a hat that says: "I come to serve"?

TODAY'S READINGS: Procession: Luke 19:28-40 (37); Mass: Isaiah 50:4-7; Philippians 2:6-11; Luke 22:14—23:56 (38). "I am among you as the one who serves."

Monday, Apr 15, 2019

MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Oil of gladness

In the Hebrew Bible, we read of kings, priests, and prophets being anointed by the pouring of oil on them. In the Catholic tradition, oils are used in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders, and Anointing of the Sick. We also use oil to bless altars and other objects. But why? Its purpose is to recognize the presence of the Holy in the person or thing anointed. To be anointed is to be set apart as special, cleansed, healed, and strengthened. Reflect on how you've been marked as belonging to God and called to share in the holy mission of Christ.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 42:1-7; John 12:1-11 (257). "Mary took a liter of costly perfumed oil made from genuine aromatic nard and anointed the feet of Jesus."

Tuesday, Apr 16, 2019

TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Don't fail to find God

One of the lessons of Holy Week is that God draws grace and goodness out of any situation—even one that to us looks like a complete failure. God uses all of what is—every person's strength and weakness, every experience, encounter, accident, war or act of kindness, natural beauty or disaster—to make visible God's love and sustaining presence in the world. The psalmist put it this way: "For darkness is as light" to God. The message of Holy Week is one for the entire year. Make a habit of looking for the ways God redeems our "failures." See how grace abounds.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 49:1-6; John 13:21-33, 36-38 (258). "I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."

Wednesday, Apr 17, 2019

WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Suffer the servant

Holy Week highlights the "Servant Songs" found in the Book of Isaiah. These are lyrical poems written about a servant whom God calls to leadership but the people abuse. The servant sacrifices himself for the sake of the people and is vindicated by God. The traditional Jewish interpretation is that the servant is a metaphor for the Israelites. Christians see the servant as a prefiguring of Jesus and the servant's suffering foretelling the Passion of Christ. Perhaps both are true. In these sacred days let your heart be filled with reverence for the suffering servant.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 50:4-9a; Matthew 26:14-25 (259). "I have not rebelled, have not turned back. I gave my back to those who beat me . . . My face I did not shield."

Thursday, Apr 18, 2019

HOLY THURSDAY; EVENING MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Triduum enchilada

Tonight's Mass of the Lord's Supper begins with the Sign of the Cross. Take note of it because you won't see another one for three days until the blessing and dismissal from the Easter Vigil. The reason for this is because the Triduum, the Three Days of Easter, is of one piece. It begins tonight and is carried through Good Friday and on to the Easter Vigil. So Catholics enjoy staying "in the zone" of celebration for the whole enchilada. Every thought, word, and action is wrapped in the awareness of the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Triduum is moving and deeply enriching, so join in fully!

TODAY'S READINGS: Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-15 (39). "If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet."

Friday, Apr 19, 2019

FRIDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION (GOOD FRIDAY); DAY OF ABSTINENCE

It is finished—and it has just begun

We can look high and low but we will not find a Catholic Mass celebrated anywhere on this day. There is a Good Friday service, to be sure, but there is no Mass. However, we will gather in churches throughout the world to hear scripture tell of the trial, death, and burial of Jesus. We will pray the prescribed 10 prayers of intercession. We will walk in procession to venerate the cross. And, on this second of the three sacred days this week that are known as the Triduum, we will receive the Eucharist, consecrated at the Mass of the Last Supper the night before. On this day of prayer and remembrance, do one thing to imitate the love and compassion of Jesus.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 52:13—53:12; Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9; John 18:1—19:42 (40). "And after this, Joseph of Arimathea . . . asked Pilate if he could remove the body of Jesus."

Saturday, Apr 20, 2019

HOLY SATURDAY; EASTER VIGIL

A vigil for the ages

The Easter Vigil Mass we celebrate today has not always been popular, having been an institution in the early centuries of the church, falling from practice in the Middle Ages, and then re-emerging around Vatican II. Today this "mother of all vigils" (as Saint Augustine called it) moves people through its intense symbolism of fire, light, dark, incense, and song. The Easter Vigil reminds us that faith isn't just an idea; it is a full-body experience and way of life. Whether or not you attend the Easter Vigil, you can allow your faith to be a full-sensory experience, perceiving God in touch, song, aroma, and beauty.

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 1:1—2:2; Genesis 22:1-18; Exodus 14:15—15:1; Exodus 15:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 17-18; Isaiah 54:5-14; Isaiah 55:1-11; Baruch 3:9-15, 32—4:4; Ezekiel 36:16-17a, 18-28; Romans 6:3-11; Luke 24:1-12 (41). "You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation."

Invest just five minutes a day, and your faith will deepen and grow—a day at a time



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