



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

For the Holy Days, I will step away from our study of the Mass.

This weekend, we celebrate Palm/Passion Sunday. At the beginning of Mass, we have the "proto-Gospel" ("first Gospel") with the account of Jesus' Triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Despite this glory and the Hosannas that are sung, the day is clouded, for we know this is the week He dies. In commemoration of this, we read St. Mark's Passion narrative – the story of how Jesus suffers and dies for us.

It is also a reminder to us that it is so easy for us to change our focus on Christ. In moments of consolation, we can easily keep our eyes on Jesus, but when desolation hits, it becomes much easier for us to turn away from God – as did the crowds. Instead of singing "Hosanna," we shout, "Crucify Him!" In the midst of this, God hasn't changed His love for us, but our experience of His love has changed such that we might no longer feel close to Him. In those moments, we need to cling to the truth that God is faithful, even when we are not; God infinitely loves us, even when we feel no love for Him.

Thursday begins the Sacred Triduum, with our Holy Thursday liturgy. At the Mass, we recount part of the Scriptures of the Passover, the institution of the Eucharist, and how Jesus washes the feet of His disciples. I will then wash the feet of twelve people, reminding us of this incredible act of humility and service that Jesus did. At the end of Mass, we process around the Church with Jesus in the Eucharist, and go to the Parish Center – our own Garden of Gethsemane. Here, we recall how Jesus prayed in His agony before His arrest. The disciples slept, but we have the opportunity to keep watch with Him.

On Good Friday, the Liturgy at 3:00 begins in silence, with a time of prayer, recalling that this is the day and hour in which Jesus died for us. Our readings bring us through the mystery of Christ's death, culminating with the reading of the Passion of St. John. We have ten solemn intercessions for the Church and the world, and then the opportunity to come forward and show proper adoration to the Cross of Christ. We love the Cross not for its own sake, but for Him who hung on it for love of us. As a sign of how the Eucharist is intimately connected with the Crucifixion, we receive Communion from the Mass from Holy Thursday.

Good Friday is the beginning of the Divine Mercy Novena – praying nine days for God's mercy upon the world. We'll begin it publicly immediately after the Good Friday service, but you can pray it on your own (pamphlets are available in the Church).

The Easter Vigil is filled with all manner of symbols, as we celebrate Jesus' resurrection from the dead, as well as the initiation of those entering the Catholic Church. We go from darkness to light – starting with blessing the Easter fire and Easter candle, culminating with everyone having lit candles, as I sing the Exultet: a song of praise to God for the saving work Jesus did for us. We hear from the Old Testament about how God prepared for the coming of Christ, and how water symbolizes our Baptism into Christ. It's amazing! And on Easter Sunday, we continue this celebration, remembering our own baptism, and sharing the joy of the Resurrection.

I so long for all of us to share in these great mysteries. If it is in any way possible, I strongly encourage you to come and join us for these high holy days. Take the time to walk with Jesus. You won't regret it!