



## **PALM SUNDAY**

*Palm Sunday* is the beginning of the Great Week - *Holy Week*. The Gospel for *Palm Sunday* recounts the day on which Our Lord entered into Jerusalem on a donkey, when the people hailed Him as King while waving Palm branches and crying out: “*Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.*” Those shouts of “*Hosanna*”, however, would soon turn into shouts of “*Away with Him, Crucify Him!*” Jesus entered the Holy City of Jerusalem hailed as a King, but His Kingdom is not of this world.

The solemn reading of the full account of the Lord’s Passion is at the center of the Palm Sunday Liturgy as we become a part of the story, not just recalling an event from the past, but experiencing it and making it present right here and now. In the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ we see all the darkness and sin that lurks in the human heart come to the surface and do its worst on Jesus. Jesus freely submitted Himself for a brief time to the power of evil in order to swallow it up in the ever greater Power of Divine Love.

## **THE SACRED EASTER TRIDUUM (The Holy Three Days):**

### **HOLY THURSDAY**

*The Sacred Easter Triduum* begins with the *Solemn Liturgy of the Lord’s Supper* in the evening, recalling when Jesus gathered with His Apostles in the upper room for the Passover Meal (The Last Supper) on the night before He died. In this Mass we re-enact what Jesus did at the Last Supper when He washed the feet of His disciples, giving them and us an example and a command of Christian charity and humility.

Most importantly, *The Solemn Liturgy of the Lord’s Supper* recalls that moment when Jesus, on the night before He died, instituted the Sacraments of the *Most Holy Eucharist* and *Holy Orders*. At the Last Supper Jesus changed bread into His Body and wine into His Blood, His same Body given up for us and His same Blood poured out for us on the Cross the next day. Commanding His Apostles to “*Do this in memory of Me*”, Jesus ordained them the first Priests of the New Covenant.

That was the first Mass, and at every Mass since then up to today, all the power of the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus is renewed and made present to us, as Jesus, through His Priests, continues to offer up His Body and pour out His Blood for us in the Eucharist under the appearances of bread and wine, giving Himself to us as food for our souls, bringing us into communion with Himself and with one another, and giving us the pledge of eternal glory. Jesus promised: “*I am with you always until the end of time.*” The *Real Presence* of Jesus in the Most Holy Eucharist fulfills this promise in a most marvelous way.

*The Solemn Liturgy of the Lord’s Supper* concludes with a Procession with the Eucharist to the Altar of Repose in the Nativity Center, as we recall how our Lord left the upper room at the conclusion of the Last Supper and went to the Garden on the Mount of Olives with His Disciples to pray, asking them to stay awake and keep watch with Him. That is what we do on this night as the Blessed Sacrament remains at the Altar of Repose for Adoration until midnight.

## GOOD FRIDAY

The day on which Our Lord suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. It is the only day of the year on which the Mass is not celebrated. The altar is stripped bare, there are no flowers, no holy water, and the Tabernacle is empty to recall that the Lord has been taken from us.

At the *Solemn Liturgy of the Lord's Passion*, the full account of the Passion of the Lord is read from Saint John's Gospel and we come forward one by one in a solemn procession to adore the *Wood of the Cross* upon which hung the Savior of the World. In this Solemn Liturgy we accompany our Lord Jesus at His trial, stay near to Him as He carries His Cross, and stand with Him along with Mary, His Mother, at the foot of the Cross as He breaths His last and is placed in the tomb. It is a day of silence, of prayer, and of fasting and abstinence from eating meat.

## HOLY SATURDAY

We wait for the Resurrection continuing our fast and prayerful silence as we recall that our Lord Jesus lays dead in the tomb. The great *Easter Vigil* begins after dark with the church in complete darkness as a large fire is lighted and blessed at the entrance of the church from which the Priest lights the Easter Candle, which represents the Risen Lord. The Easter Candle is then carried by the Deacon into the darkened church followed by the priests and other ministers. As the Easter Candle slowly moves up the center aisle to the Sanctuary, the altar servers light their small candles from the Easter Candle and pass the flame on to the small candles held by the people in the pews. In what is truly a beautiful sight, the light of the Risen Christ spreads throughout the darkened church like the Gospel has spread throughout the world. Then the "*Exultet*" is chanted, the ancient Easter Proclamation.

Next comes the *Liturgy of the Word* which traces Salvation History from the Creation of the World. The *Liturgy of the Word* builds up to the singing of the *Gloria* as the lights in the church are turned on and the bells ring out, and culminates with the singing of the *Alleluia* and the proclamation of the Gospel of the Resurrection.

Then from the Resurrection flows the Sacraments of the Church, as adults from RCIA programs throughout the world are Baptized, Confirmed, and given their First Holy Communion, and all of us who are already baptized renew our Baptismal Promises and are sprinkled with the newly blessed Easter Water, recalling the day and renewing the Grace of our own Baptism. Easter comes to its fullness in our communion with the Risen Lord in the Eucharist.

## EASTER SUNDAY

"*Christ is Risen, He is truly Risen!*" It is the Day of the Resurrection when Jesus broke the chains of sin and death, and opened up for us the Gates of Heaven. Jesus has freed us from the power of sin and death. Our joy is so great that *Easter Day* is celebrated for eight days, and then flows over into the *Easter Season* which culminates on the fiftieth day with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Solemnity of *Pentecost*, ten days after our Lord's *Ascension* into Heaven. This was the beginning of the public ministry of the Church which has brought the Gospel to the ends of the earth and will continue to do so until the Lord comes again in Glory. A blessed Easter to everyone!



*Fr. Matthew*