

LITURGY BYTES



Holy Week

The Triduum

The word triduum means three, and it also is another liturgical season! Officially, Lent ends Wednesday, March 31st. We then begin the holiest of times for the Church: Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. Last year, because of the pandemic, we did not have the opportunity to celebrate these sacred times in person. It seemed to me that these days came and went. However, I am happy to say, "Not this year!" With some of the usual rituals being omitted (for safety reasons), most of what we celebrate will allow us to experience the true Paschal mystery.

On Holy Thursday we will celebrate the Mass of the Lord's Supper when our senses are attuned to the procession and presentation of the Sacred Oils, newly blessed by our Bishop, singing the Gloria that we have not heard for six weeks, incense and the procession with the Blessed Sacrament which concludes the liturgy. This night we celebrate the priesthood and the institution of the Eucharist. You might realize that I did not mention the washing of the feet which is a normal part of this liturgy, reminding us of the example that Jesus gave us and how each of us is called to "wash feet" by serving others. During this past year, we have all seen this beautiful example lived out by many in a variety of ways. Even though we are not able to include this ritual this year, we need only recall the beautiful ways of service shown to us and how each of us is called to keep this way of life as a natural part of our lives.

Moving onto Good Friday, which shows us a totally different visual as we enter the stark, subdued environment of the church building, the liturgy picks up from yesterday and begins in silence. There is a lengthy prayer of intercessions and silent prayer. The emphasis is on the cross, and those in attendance have the opportunity to venerate this sacred symbol of our salvation. The Eucharist that was consecrated the night before is distributed to those in attendance. The music is solemn and usually includes the ever familiar "Were You There."

Similar to Good Friday, the Easter Vigil (Holy Saturday) liturgy begins in silence where the fire is prepared, as well as the Paschal candle. The church is in darkness as the candle (the light of Christ) is brought into the church in procession. Scripture readings are proclaimed telling the story of salvation history. The Gloria is sung, lights are turned on and bells are rung! We welcome the Gospel reading with the Alleluia that has been buried these past six weeks! Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia we sing. It is also at this liturgy that adults wishing to become Catholic, celebrate these very special moments. Some receive all three Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, and some already baptized receive Confirmation and Eucharist. It is a very beautiful experience for the parish community to witness this each year and welcome our new members to the parish family.

Even though these three days are not like holy days of obligation, attendance is a must, as these moments are life-giving celebrations of our beautiful faith in Christ Jesus! If you never have been able to attend, why not try to get to one of the three this year. Trust me, you will not be disappointed!

Have a safe, blessed, and healthy week! ~~~Michele Hahn

