

Dear Friends,

Over the next three weeks I am going to write about the importance of the Church's celebration of Holy Week and the Triduum. In this letter I will focus on Palm Sunday, and Holy Thursday.

On Palm Sunday we celebrate Jesus' triumphant entry into the city of Jerusalem where he suffered, died and rose again. As Jesus entered into Jerusalem he had a large crowd of people worshipping him as their king. His reputation as being the Christ (the Greek word for king) for the Jewish people, who were oppressed by Rome, made Jesus a very popular man. The crowd of people knew Jesus was a healer, a miracle worker and a prophet; they understood that he was their messiah. Unfortunately, once the crowd began to hear that the leaders of their faith had rejected Jesus' message of good news and had condemned him as being a blasphemer and a threat to the faith, many of Jesus' disciples abandoned him. His own chosen apostles ran away in fear of the soldiers who took Jesus away from the Garden.

We have a similar concept of Jesus Christ even to this day. We call him Messiah, Lord and Son of God. During the Palm Sunday Liturgy we focus our attention upon the saving power of Jesus' love for us. In a spiritual way, we place ourselves in the crowd that lays down palm branches as Jesus enters Jerusalem. However, since we know that Jesus did indeed rise again for the salvation of the world and that Paschal Mystery continues to this day, we do not abandon him. We continue the journey to the Last Supper, to Calvary and to the tomb. We are present to celebrate Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

On Holy Thursday we will celebrate the Mass of the Lord's Supper, which is an ancient tradition. There will be no other Mass celebrated in the Church throughout the world during that day, except for the Chrism Mass in which the bishops consecrate the Holy Oils (Chrism, Oil of the Catechumens and Oil of the Sick) which are used throughout the year in the Church's sacraments. During the Chrism Mass the priests of the

diocese gather and we renew the promises we made when we were ordained: to serve the people of God, to prayerfully lead them to God and to be obedient to our bishop.

The Season of Lent ends with the Mass of the Lord's Supper, which is to be held at a time when there can be full participation of all the faithful and the clergy. This is why the Mass is going to be at 7:00 Thursday evening. During this Mass we celebrate what Jesus did at the Last Supper when he instituted the Eucharist, the most important sacrament in the Church. We also celebrate our commissioning, as people of faith, to do what Christ has done for us. We are to serve the needs of those who suffer in this world. Jesus Christ lives in us and urges us to take up our cross each day and to follow in his steps. At the end of this Mass there will be no final blessing. Instead, we will process with the remaining consecrated hosts to an altar of repose where we will be asked to remain with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemene. This is a time for us to reflect on what Jesus experienced when he was tempted by Satan again. Jesus prayed with such intensity that he bled. His prayer was one of complete abandonment to the will of God.

Please come to this beautiful Eucharistic liturgy; it is one of the most important celebrations of the year. Please do not be persuaded that other events are more important to us. The Holy Triduum, the Three Days, celebrates the Paschal Mystery by which we are given the gift of eternal salvation. What can be more important to us than that?

In joyful hope,
Fr. Tim Seigel