

Holy Week, Easter, and Divine Mercy Sunday

This week the Church enters the most solemn week of the whole liturgical year, what is called Holy Week. It begins with “Palm Sunday of the Passion of our Lord,” typically called Palm Sunday or Passion Sunday for short. Lent ends with the beginning of the Triduum. “Tri” means 3 and duum is the plural for day (i.e., means days) so the Triduum is so-named because it consists of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. Lent ends and the Triduum begins with the celebration of the Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday evening.

Palm Sunday begins with our Lord’s seemingly glorious entry into Jerusalem. How did the King of the Universe enter Jerusalem? Riding on a donkey that had never been ridden. Kings did not ride on donkeys, much less ones not yet broke to ride. They rode on magnificent and well-trained horses. There is something different about this King. He is meek and humble of heart and the meek and humble of heart, the contrite, can approach Him. In fact, only they can really approach Him, only they can form union with Him.

They sing Hosanna when He enters, laying palm branches before Him. But, through plotting and scheming, this will be replaced in just a short time with a mob shouting: Crucify Him, Crucify Him. He knows it’s going to happen and He allows it to happen. But He knows something more than the schemers, the mob, the blind. He allows those who have chosen hatred for what is right and good and true, hatred of the Savior of the world, to do their worst and then, for the sake of the meek and humble of heart, for the sake of the repentant, He simply gets back up. He says to His sons and daughters: do you not see – even when those blinded by the rage of self-interest do their worst, I cannot be overcome. Can you not believe? Can you not trust when I allow you to face similar things? Do you not know that if you endure these same trials for my sake that I will bring you to the same glorious end? Why do you waver? Do not be afraid, I cannot be overcome.

The Mass of the Lord’s Supper is celebrated on a Thursday simply because our Lord was crucified on a Friday which means that the Last Supper was on a Thursday. At the Last Supper our Lord created 2 sacraments: The Holy Eucharist and Holy Orders. One of the main reasons for Holy Orders (the ordained priesthood) is to perpetuate His presence amongst us with the Blessed Sacrament. Do we really appreciate this? Unless we stop and really think about, really ponder, what it is that our Lord has done we *cannot* appreciate what He has done. Ladies and gentlemen, I plead with you on behalf of our Lord to take time, make time, during Holy Week to do just that. Don’t just let this most solemn and sacred week be just another week. I know you are busy but we can’t just blindly follow all of the various demands on our time and let our Lord be shoved into the background during this most holy season. Say no to that, be determined. Our Lord is good, the ultimate good. Make time for Him. **Make time to come to the Holy Week liturgies. Make time to stop and think about the events of the Triduum.** In doing so, you will find refreshment for your soul and a greater peace for you and your family.

After the Last Supper Jesus and the Apostles, except for Judas, move to the Garden of Gethsemane after the Last Supper. Judas will come later; he has chosen to believe that he knows “The Way” better than our Lord. He is the decider, not our Lord. How often have I followed Judas rather than the other Apostles? Our Lord falls to the ground and begins to pray. He feels the entire weight of every single sin ever committed. I look and I see my sins there. So intense is the suffering that He breaks out in a bloody sweat. I’m sorry Lord, my good Lord, I know it is me who has caused this. Judas comes with the soldiers. Ah, Judas, will you betray the Son of Man with a kiss? Will you pretend at friendship while you betray, while you hand Me over?

We move now to the second day, the Friday that the Church now calls Good Friday. Why is it called good? We will remind ourselves of a simple little analogy. A young child picks a handful of wild flowers for their mother. They are thinking of the mother the whole time they are picking them – it’s not much but it’s the most they can do. And they can’t wait to give them to her because they want to tell their mom: this is how much you mean to me – the most beautiful flowers I can find. But then, when they go to run to their mom to be with her and to present their flowers, a great chasm stands between them. It is impossible, absolutely and irrevocably impossible, for the child to cross. So what does the mother do? She stands and says: I will fill in the chasm so that those wishing to come can come. This is good, it brings the child happiness. And this is why this Friday is called good. But how many simply pass it by. Ah, I have more important things to do. Do you? That’s too

childish for me, I'm grown up and am proud. Are you now? Your fine lie (as Daniel said to the wicked judges of Israel) has cost you your head, your eternal life. Our Lord fills in the infinite hole for us, but we have to choose to cross over to Him, and it takes a conscious, intentional decision, and real effort, to do so. It is not cheap, it is not easy, and it is most certainly not automatic. What passes through His mind as He enters His Passion? "How many I see," He says to Josefa, "for whom my Blood is shed in vain." How many will simply turn up their nose at the gift I have made for them and paid for with my life. Imagine if it was you. Imagine if you had poured your whole heart, mind, soul, and strength into a gift – say for your child – that you left yourself with nothing in order to bestow this gift upon them and they take one look at it, scoff, and throw it in the trash. This is what our Lord saw would happen so often. Will it be me? Can I not see all that He has done and then at least (and at last) make up mind to "do whatever He asks," as per the example of our Holy Mother? Does the unfathomable love of God not inspire me at all to respond in kind? Must I scourge Him over and over again? I do not have to make it all at once; that is not possible. But I must move and continue to move until I have drawn my last breath.

He is put on trial. How absurd. The almighty, all-good, ever-living, and all-knowing God is put on trial by the simplest of His cognizant creatures. How often He is put on trial – every time that man places judgment on what He has revealed. Today it is often held as the highest good to do exactly that. And the shout resounds again: Crucify Him, Crucify Him. Will I yield to the mob? Will I simply follow the mob blindly yet once again? This is what everybody is doing so I'll just go along?

He bows His head and dies. At this point in either the Stations or the reading of the Passion we stop in silence. All the running here and there, all of the squabbling over me and what I want and when I want it, all of the various means of self-glorification, it stops. Our Lord has died without me even realizing it because of all the noise that I have been caught up in. He is dead and I have caused it. A sobering silence settles in. My God, what have I done? I wail inside: Please Lord, no.

The third day of the Triduum – He lies in the tomb. I am overcome with remorse. There is no relief, no consolation. Lord, I am so sorry. But what happens next? Imagine that someone, God forbid, hits someone with their car and kills them. The person, even if it wasn't their fault – but worse yet if it was – is devastated. They can't stand it. It's unbearable. I can't live with this. I can't stand the guilt. The person is at their end, they can longer live with it, they wish even for death and perhaps even seek it. But then, when all seems lost, they look up and they see the person standing there, smiling at them in a friendly way, and the person you hit says: it's ok – see I'm alive, I'm ok. My God, what a tremendous relief. Thank God! Is this my reaction? Do I jump up in happiness and grab the person, clasping them to myself in tremendous gratitude? Any decent person would. They would make fast friends with the person who was so good to come to them and relieve their misery. This is Easter Sunday. Is this my reaction or, will I look at the one who has risen, scoff, and tell Him I don't care, leave me alone so I can get back to what pleases me? Some are even worse yet and say: I'll kill you again, you wait and see. I have to choose. The one whom I killed bears no grudge against me. He simply wants me to choose now to be reunited with Him, to accept the very mercy that He came to bestow. Why not do just that? It's ours for the taking. This is the truth, this is reality. I reject it only at my own demise.

The brilliance of God really comes out with the Sunday after Easter, so much so that it is difficult to express. We are guilty and the debt is infinite. God becomes man, suffers, dies, and rises again for the sake of our redemption, redemption that is brought about first and foremost through reconciliation with God, through the mercy of God. After recalling all of this through the Triduum and Easter Sunday – a way to be rid of our terrible, burdensome guilt, He establishes a feast precisely for that mercy, which is Divine Mercy Sunday, the Sunday after Easter. He created a tangible way to receive the mercy He has won for us, which is, of course, the Sacrament of Confession. Our Lord said to St Faustina: "I am giving mankind the last hope of salvation, that is recourse to My mercy." It is our Lord's will that parishes have a celebration of His mercy on the Sunday after Easter. It's not really feasible for a priest to have more than one so we will have 3 in our pastorate. Times and places are given in the bulletin. Do not let it pass by. God bless you, Fr Kuhn.