

GROW IN YOUR FAITH

For the next few weeks, we will forgo the Saint of the Day and the Catholic Q&A to discuss the most sacred week in the liturgical year, Holy Week.

GOOD FRIDAY

Last week, we discussed Palm Sunday and Holy Thursday. If you missed last week's column, bulletins are available on our website and in the MyParish app.



Good Friday is the second day of the Triduum. We remember Jesus being crucified, buried, and descending to the dead. According to the Gospel accounts, Jesus was arrested Thursday after Passover supper, after being betrayed by Judas. In the early morning hours of Friday, he was brought before the Jewish high priest Annas, who charged him with blasphemy. He was then taken to Pontius Pilate, who said he found no fault with him, and appealed to Herod. Herod, too, refused to condemn him to death, and sent him back to Pilate. Fearing a riot, Pilate eventually agreed to have him crucified, after having him brutally flogged.

These are the events we recall on Good Friday, which is the most somber day of the year. When we leave church on Holy Thursday, we do so in silence, and when we begin the celebration again on Friday, we begin in silence. That is because it's a continuation of one Liturgy. When you arrive to church for the Celebration of the Lord's Passion, you'll see the sanctuary has been stripped of any decorations, and the tabernacle is open and empty. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is not celebrated today; it is the only day of the year that the Church does not consecrate the bread for the Holy Eucharist. Churches often distribute communion on Good Friday, but it is bread that was consecrated at the Feast of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday.

On Good Friday, we begin with a reading of the Passion narrative. Then, the priest carries a veiled cross through the church, unveiling it and singing "Behold the wood of the Cross on which hung the Savior [or salvation] of the world." Then, the congregation comes forward to kiss, touch, or bow before the wood of the cross or the corpus hanging on the cross. This tradition is about 1,300 years old, and developed out of the tradition of venerating the piece of wood found by Saint Helena, mother of the emperor Constantine, which is believed to have been an actual piece of the cross upon which Jesus was crucified.

After His crucifixion, Jesus "descended into hell", as we say in the Apostles Creed. This doesn't refer to the literal hell of eternal damnation, but more of a place of waiting. After Adam and Eve sinned, the gates of Heaven were closed. Those people who died in friendship with God didn't go to heaven or eternal hell, but went to Hades, a place in the underworld for those who were awaiting eternal salvation. It was so named because everyone – damned and righteous – could not see God, could not commune with him in eternal glory, until a savior was to come, die for us, and rise again.

As we read in The Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 632: The frequent New Testament affirmations that Jesus was "raised from the dead" presuppose that the crucified one sojourned in the realm of the dead prior to his resurrection. This was the first meaning given in the apostolic preaching to Christ's descent into hell: that Jesus, like all men, experienced death and in his soul joined the others in the realm of the dead. But he descended there as Savior, proclaiming the Good News to the spirits imprisoned there.

The first people to hear the good news of Jesus Christ after His death were those holy souls who died before Him, and awaited Him so that they might enter Heaven with Him. What joy they must have felt when he told them to "Awake, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light."

Saint Ursula will celebrate the Lord's Passion at 7pm on Friday, April 19th. We will also offer outdoor Stations of the Cross at noon and indoor Stations of the Cross at 3pm.