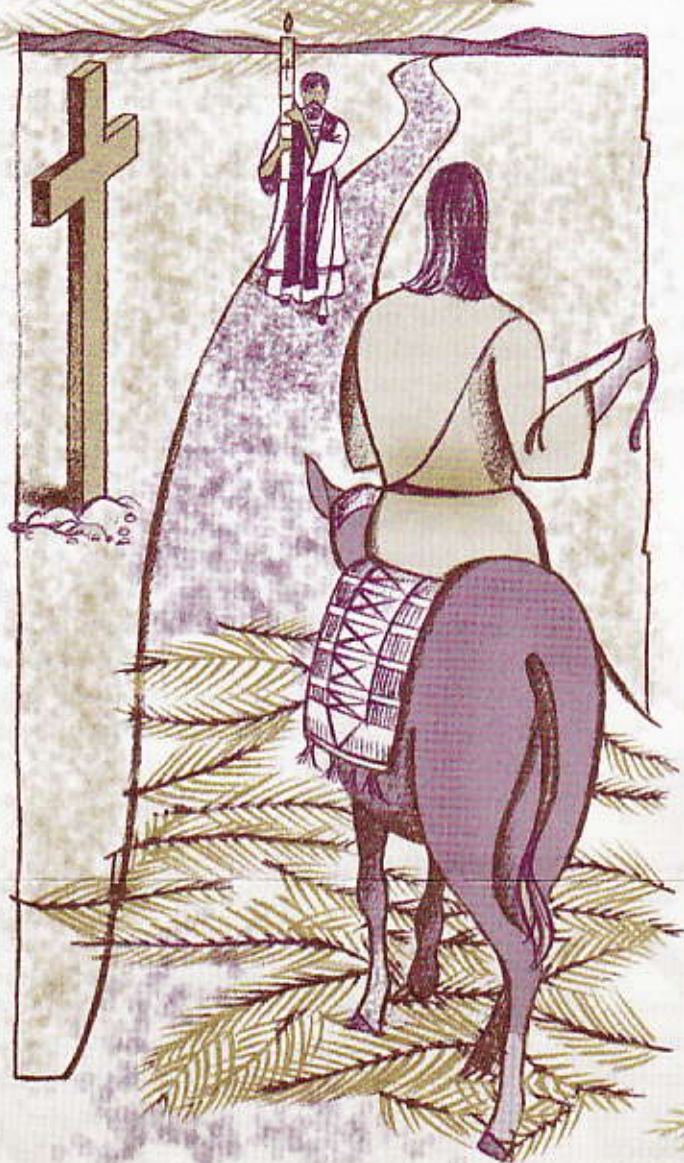


Holy Week



Prayer for Holy Week

God, our Father,
let the same mind be in us that was in
your Son,
*who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.*
And being found in human form,
*he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point
of death—
even death on a cross.*

Let us ever confess that Jesus Christ
is Lord. Amen.

April 5, 2009 The Whole Truth

Today's liturgy, Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion, is one of contrast. Holy Week begins with the triumphant entrance of Palm Sunday as we process, carrying palms and singing, "Hosanna in the Highest." Then it turns abruptly to the Passion narrative—and we are launched toward the most sacred days of the year. As Holy Week unfolds, we will experience the loving intimacy of Holy Thursday, the stark sorrow, failure, and loss of Good Friday, the rich mystery of the Easter Vigil, and the exultant joy of Easter. These events may evoke very different moods, yet they are held together by a single unfolding mystery. In the Eastern churches, this is called the "Week of Salvation." We

need to embrace the experiences of this week in their totality. Some of them will be painful indeed, tempting us to engage in one day and ignore another. But without wholeheartedly entering into each moment, we miss the full revelation of the Church's greatest treasure. Holy Week offers us the opportunity to enter into the whole truth of our faith, which is, ultimately, the whole truth of our lives. So let everything else move aside. Be present with your community at all the Triduum liturgies, be attentive to the Spirit leading you all week long, through the suffering into the joy.

This Week at Home

Monday, April 6

Remembering Loved Ones

The shift in mood of the Palm Sunday liturgy reminds us that we are now facing suffering and death. It is not surprising, therefore, that it became traditional to visit the graves of relatives after Mass on Palm Sunday and in the days immediately following, decorating the graves with palm bouquets. Visit the graves of loved ones, or place pictures of deceased loved ones on your home altar or mantle. Decorate with palms. Remember them in your evening prayers.



Tuesday, April 7

Spring Cleaning

The three days after Palm Sunday are traditionally spent cleaning house. This housecleaning has ancient roots. In Jewish homes, a thorough housecleaning took place as preparation for the Passover festival. In memory of the Exodus, when the Jewish people left in such a hurry there was no time for the bread to rise, unleavened bread (*matzo*) was eaten. Therefore only unleavened bread is eaten for Passover and all traces of leavened food (*hametz*) are removed from the home. Explore the spiritual dimensions of housework this week as you prepare for Easter. Some families do a Lenten closet cleaning, giving useable items to the poor. Others prepare for the Christ light by polishing candleholders.

Wednesday, April 8

Preparing for the Triduum

The Triduum (meaning "three days") begins with the liturgy of Holy Thursday tomorrow evening. Our experience of Easter will be greatly influenced by the way

we celebrate the holy days preceding it. Try to finish any preparations of Easter foods and decorations that can be done in advance by the afternoon of Holy Thursday, so that everything is in readiness. These three sacred days can then be observed in a spirit of prayer rather than in a flurry of anxious business.

Thursday, April 9

Holy Thursday

The sacred meal of the Eucharist begins the Paschal Triduum, the heart of our liturgical year. Families attend Holy Thursday services together today. After Mass, the Blessed Sacrament is carried in procession to the altar of repose. Plan on spending time today venerating the Blessed Sacrament. This day is also known as Maundy Thursday, or Thursday of the *Mandatum*. *Mandatum* is the "commandment" to love one another as Christ has loved us (John 13:34), expressed in the foot-washing ritual which reenacts Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet. Make your family meal special tonight. Give each family member a way to serve (setting and decorating the table, making the salad, saying grace, cleaning up).

Friday, April 10

Good Friday

We take this day off work and spend it with our families, attending church together and venerating the cross. At home, radios and TVs are turned off. Drapes may be drawn, especially at 3:00 in the afternoon, when we recall Christ's death on the cross. Young children may be given quiet games to play.

Saturday, April 11

Holy Saturday

Today's fasting is one of eager anticipation, heightened by the sweet yeasty scents of soon-to-be-eaten foods and by the fragrance of lilies for the dining table hidden on the porch. Spiritually, this is a day of resting and waiting for the Easter Vigil, but for families it is likely to be a busy day as the house is decorated and Easter foods are prepared. These tasks occupy our hands but leave our hearts free to muse on the mystery we are preparing to celebrate. Easter breads, symbolizing Christ, the bread of life, are prepared today, to be eaten after the Easter Vigil, and eggs, symbolizing the Resurrection, are boiled and decorated.

