



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are now on the 5th Sunday of Lent. This means Lent is nearly over. I encourage you to continue your Lenten observances, persevering to the end... or restarting them (yet again) to get to the great glory of Easter.

We are about to enter into the high holy days of our faith. The next few weeks tell the story of who we are as a people. Sometimes, we forget our story, and so we have to be reminded. The Church reminds us every year, because if we stop remembering, we forget.

Next weekend, we celebrate Palm Sunday or Passion Sunday. It is a unique day in that we hear two different Gospels in the same Mass. The first Gospel is that of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. People wave palms and cry out "**Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!**" (Mark 11:9). We then read the Passion of the Lord according to Mark. Within a quarter of an hour, we go from our Hosannas to "Crucify Him" (Mark 15:13-14 – this year, due to COVID, and the lack of missalettes in the pews, the "Crowd" parts will be read by the Narrator). It is a reminder that from Sunday to Friday, the tone of the crowd made a hundred-eighty degree turn. As do our hearts, so easily.

Then we enter into the Sacred Triduum – the Three Days. We begin on Holy Thursday in the Upper Room at the Last Supper. While there will be no enactment of the washing of feet this year, we remember it in the Gospel, as well as the institution of the Holy Eucharist and of the Priesthood. These celebrations remind us of how Jesus gave us the Mass and the mandate humbly to serve others.

On Good Friday, we remember the death of the Lord. Every year we read through the Passion according to St. John, and come forward to adore the Holy Cross. This year, we will still come forward, but (again, COVID) will not be touching the Cross – rather, we will make a sign of our love by bowing or genuflecting to the Cross. On this day, more than any other day, we are invited to remember the complete abasement of God – how He not only took on our flesh, but also took on every suffering, every evil we experience, every sin we commit. He took all of that on as He went to the Cross, and then, crying out in His *thirst* for our love, He gives His life over and dies. Ponder this! God – who is the way, the truth and the *life* (see John 14:6) – dies.

On Saturday evening, we celebrate the Easter Vigil. At this Mass, we go from darkness to light – beginning with all the lights off, and moving to a moment when everyone has a lit candle in their hands, and all the lights are on in the Church. We sing praise to our God. The Alleluia returns in glory! If we had people entering the Church, they would be initiated at this Mass. We celebrate how God conquered death, He conquered sin by taking it onto Himself. As you celebrate at the Easter Vigil or Easter Sunday (please remember that you need to sign up through the office for Easter Sunday Mass), remember that the huge stone that blocked the tomb of Jesus was rolled away. See in that the image of every problem, every suffering you have, every addiction with which you struggle, every sin that overcomes you, all of these areas of darkness are conquered by the Resurrection of Jesus. Nothing is too much for Him, too great. Jesus Christ conquers!

Finally, a week later, we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday. While, of course, we remember the specific revelation of Jesus to St. Faustina in the 1930s as He showed her His infinite mercy for sinners, we remember that that mercy has been a central part of our faith for over 2000 years. The whole celebration of Holy Week and Easter is focused on God's Divine Mercy – that He loves us so much, He is willing to forgive anything and everything!

As we prepare to enter into these holy days, I invite you to take the time to reflect on what we are celebrating, what we are remembering. God's love is so incredible *for you*, and He is calling *you* into a deeper, more personal, more intimate relationship with Him... because you're His daughter, His son. Remember who you are.