

Family of Four Parishes

Old St. Mary, Our Lady Divine Providence, SS Peter & Paul, and Three Holy Women



Dear Friends,

Just the words chicken soup are synonymous with pure comfort. It may even have the ability of transporting oneself back to grandma's kitchen for a feeling of warmth and love on a cool spring day. Preparations for our Easter celebration began on the Saturday before Palm Sunday, and is my favorite memory growing up. My family loved Easter!!

My grandma was a generous woman. She would rise early to locate the extra-large soup kettle to prepare her homemade chicken soup. Soon everyone was up early getting their chores done. On that day my grandma checked off her to-do list. Basket for the food blessing found. Easter clothes washed and ironed. Grocery shopping done. Hard boiled eggs dyed. The church bulletin with the Holy Week and Easter schedule taped to the side of the refrigerator.



By mid-afternoon we would be finished with the majority of our chores, and we packed up the homemade chicken soup, freshly baked bread and other homemade goodies to share with our family who were unable to leave their homes due to chronic illness. My grandma called it, "a spoonful of comfort."



As we traveled, I remember how my grandmother spoke of Jesus (her trusted friend), the loneliness he must have felt during his final days as he went up to Jerusalem and on to Calvary. How his followers began fleeing and leaving him alone with the soldiers, and the betrayal by Judas and Peter's denial. Having only a handful of loved ones standing in the compassion at the foot of the cross.

Her voice trembled with deep sadness, it is hard enough to go through pain and heartache when we have support and encouragement. How agonizing it is to feel abandoned or misunderstood or isolated when we are experiencing trials and tribulations. Holy Week is a call to join with Jesus in his lonely journey. Let us look at our world and see how we can give support and encouragement to those who are on their own Calvary journey of pain and sorrow.



Holy Week is the most solemn and glorious week in Christianity, the high point of the liturgical year. It's more sacred than Christmas! This is because Holy Week commemorates the final week of Our Lord's life, the very purpose for which Christmas happened.

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday (when Jesus made his final entrance into Jerusalem) and culminates with Easter Sunday. As Holy Week progresses to its final days the solemnity heightens. My prayer is that the following pages of prayer and reflection will draw you closer to our Lord Savior.

A blessed Holy Week! Love, *Terri*

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JESUS RAISES LAZARUS FROM THE DEAD

Jesus said, "Move the stone away."

Martha, the sister of the dead man, said, "But, Lord, it has been four days since he died. There will be a bad smell." Then Jesus said to her, "Didn't I tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"

So they moved the stone away from the entrance. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you heard me. I know that you always hear me, but I said these things because of the people here around me. I want them to believe that you sent me." After Jesus said this, he cried out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with pieces of cloth, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus, said to them, "Take the cloth off of him, and let him go."

A large crowd of Jews heard that Jesus was in Bethany. So they went there to see not only Jesus but Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead. So the leading priests made plans to kill Lazarus, too. Because of Lazarus many of the Jews were leaving them and believing in Jesus. John 11:39-44; 12:9-11



The miracle Jesus performed in raising Lazarus from the dead was not just for the benefit of Mary and Martha. Jesus' miracles were for the whole community to know that he really was the son of the living God, and that

God's true presence was among them. The gospel said that after this miracle, many of the Jews who had come to be with Mary and Martha, and had seen Jesus perform this miracle, came to believe that Jesus truly was the son of God.

Can you even begin to imagine what it must have been like to see Lazarus walk out of his tomb? If Jesus could raise Lazarus from the dead, and conquer his own death when he rose from the grave on Easter morning, there is no doubt that Jesus will raise us from the dead one day as well. He has power over life and death, and we need not fear death as long as Jesus is by our side.

Death is but a doorway into eternal life. We need not fear the other side. Jesus is waiting for us there. He proved to all of us that there is life after death, by bringing Lazarus back from the dead and by rising from his own grave on Easter morning. This is the Good News that all of mankind longs to hear. Death does not have the final say. Jesus Christ does.

Everyone has a story to tell. How is God calling you to be a Lazarus? What needs to die for new life?



MARY WASHES JESUS' FEET WITH HER HAIR

Six days before the Passover Feast, Jesus went to Bethany, where Lazarus lived. (Lazarus is the man Jesus raised from the dead.) There they had a dinner for Jesus. Martha (Mary's sister) served the food, and Lazarus was one of the people eating with Jesus. Mary brought in a pint of very expensive perfume made from pure nard. She poured the perfume on Jesus' feet, and then she wiped his feet with her hair. And the sweet smell from the perfume filled the whole house.

John 12:1-3

Is Mary in the kitchen? No, she is playing her flute for Jesus. She is worshiping, for that is what she loves to do. But, this time Martha doesn't object. She has learned that there is a place for praise and worship, and that is what Mary is doing. And what is Mary's part in the dinner? She brings a pint of very expensive perfume and pours it on Jesus's feet, then wipes his feet with her hair. The smell of the perfume fills the house.

Mary's love was gifted with praise, and she didn't just talk about Christ, she radiated Him. Mary (Bethany) never forgot how much God loves worship, and that God wanted to be known as a good father. And, that father liked nothing more than to have his children sit at his feet and spend time with him.

***At Jesus' feet we find Him to all together lovely.
At Jesus's feet we discover the better part, the highest call, the deepest love, the greatest riches, the truest joys, and the purest worship.
At Jesus's feet we release our burdens, pour forth our adoration, and receive the blessings that will have meaning for a lifetime.***

Palm Sunday

On this day of great rejoicing,
Lord Jesus Christ, when we welcome
You as our King and Savior,
we also walk in the shadow of Your Cross.

Hosanna!! We cry.
Blessed are You who come
in God's name to save us.

Hosanna!!

Strengthen our faith on this Palm Sunday
so that when the time comes
to carry the cross we might still
call out to You with heartfelt praise.

Give us the grace and the courage
to follow you this Holy Week
from death to resurrection,
from darkness to the fullness of light.

We need You,
Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior
Hosanna!!



Call to Prayer

During this holy week, united to Christ in his passion, death and resurrection, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Let us pray.

O God, you have given us Christ who emptied himself that we might have life. He modeled for us a humility that put your will above all else.

Grace us with your Spirit that we too many follow in Christ's way, selflessly serving your people as he did and humbly carrying our cross to the honor, glory, and praise of your name now and for ever.

Amen.

Philippians: 2:6-11

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Reflection Questions:

What challenges does this passage give you as we strive to imitate Christ? How do you enter into the celebration of Holy Week and the Easter Triduum? How do these holy days touch your own faith experience?

Intercessions:

Recognizing that God has already given us the ultimate gift of salvation, we ask now that God hear the needs we have today as we respond: God of all salvation, hear our prayer.

That during this Holy Week, Christians everywhere will be united in Christ and serve as signs to the world of God's magnanimous love for all, we pray: God of all salvation, hear our prayer.

That we bear the suffering that comes from carrying the cross in our own lives, confident that we, too, will experience new life, we pray: God of all salvation, hear our prayer.

That all those we serve as we follow Christ's example may know his love and concern for them through our selfless giving, we pray: God of all salvation, hear our prayer.

For what else do we pray today?

We gather all our prayers and pray as Jesus taught us:

Our Father....

Christ Jesus, you came among us and gave of your life for our sake, being obedient to the point of death on the cross.

As we celebrate this great mystery, let us enter into our own passing from death to life and confess you as Lord, to the praise from death to life and confess you as Lord, to the praise of God, whom you join in resurrected glory now and for ever.

May the God who loves us, the Christ who saves us, and the Spirit who makes us one, bless us now and always. Amen.



JESUS CLEARS THE TEMPLE

Jesus went into the Temple and threw out all the people who were buying and selling there. He turned over the tables of those who were exchanging different kinds of money, and he upset the benches of those who were selling doves. Jesus said, to all the people there, "It is written in the Scriptures, 'My Temple will be called a house for prayer.' But you are changing it into a 'hideout for robbers.'"

Matthew 21: 12-13

Today's Gospel reading reminds me that we are Jesus' personal temples; His tabernacles. We must do our part to keep our tabernacle free from vices and disruptions to His influence. The holiness of our temples is not built overnight but takes a lifetime to become constructed. In our journey it is not always easy to recognize Christ who has been and is now actually present. The signs of this "knowing" include observing that we do not come first in thoughts, prayers, and that we do God's will without hesitation.

Do you not know that **you are God's temple** and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and **you are that temple.**

JESUS WASHES HIS DISCIPLES' FEET

Jesus knew that the father had given him power over everything and that he had come from God and was going back to God. So during the meal Jesus stood up and took off his outer clothing. Taking a towel, he wrapped it around his waist. Then he poured water into a bowl and began to wash the followers' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. John 13:3-5

It's difficult to understand how God can be so kind to us, but he is. He kneels before us, takes our feet in his hands, and washes them. Please understand that in washing the disciples' feet, Jesus is washing ours. That's us being cleansed, not from our dirt, but from our sin.

Listen to what Jesus said, "If I don't wash your feet, you are not one of my people" (John 13:8). Why not? Because we cannot. We cannot remove our own sin.

To place our feet in the basin of Jesus is to place the filthiest parts of our lives into his hands. In the ancient East, people's feet were caked with mud and dirt. The servant of the feast saw to it that the feet were cleaned. Jesus is assuming the role of the servant. He will wash the grimeiest part of your life.



If you let him. The water of the Servant comes only when we confess that we are dirty. And we will never be able to wash the feet of those who have hurt us until we allow Jesus, the one we have hurt, to wash ours.

For a moment imagine the warm water on your feet, and Jesus gently washing them, wipes them dry and gently seals with a kiss.



THE LAST SUPPER

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the followers came to Jesus. They said, "Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover meal?"

Jesus answered, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: The chosen time is near. I will have the Passover with my followers at your house.'" The followers did what Jesus told them to do and they prepared the Passover meal.

In the evening Jesus was sitting at the table with his twelve followers... While they were eating, Jesus took some bread and thanked God for it and broke. Then he gave it to his followers and said, "Take the bread and eat it; this is my body."

Then Jesus took a cup and thanked God for it and gave it to the followers. He said, "Every one of you drink this. This is my blood which is the new agreement that God makes with his people. This blood is poured out for many to forgive their sins. I tell you this: I will not drink of this fruit of the vine again until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. Matthew 26:17-20, 26-30

On Holy Thursday, Jesus celebrates a new Passover and gives the Bread of Life as nourishment for our journey to spiritual freedom. This celebration is an invitation to remember that we are pilgrims on a spiritual journey in which God travels with us.

Let us remember that God is always ready to nourish us on the journey to our true self. We are only passing through this time and place. While our life here is valuable and essential to our spiritual growth, we cannot get so rooted and attached to earthly values that we refuse to hear the call of God to move on to deeper growth. Today, let us partake of the Eucharist, "like those who are in flight," ready to go and eager to grow.

God, loosen my tight hold on whatever keeps me from being free to grow.



In 2019, our Family of Four Parishes took a bus pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Christ's Passion. It is a multi-media, interactive, half-mile winding Prayer Trail that depicts the last days of Jesus Christ's life. These images of The Last Supper were taken, we gathered around the table with our Lord, and prayed. A very powerful day!

Forty life-size bronze sculptures in a tranquil setting, complete with beautiful music and amazingly sculptured gardens, allow visitors to experience the story of the crucifixion and resurrection as never before!



The Passion of Jesus

Jesus stood before Pilate the governor, and Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Those are your words." When the leading priest and the older leaders accused



Jesus, he said nothing. So Pilate said to Jesus, "Don't you hear them accusing you of all these things?" But Jesus said nothing in answer to Pilate, and Pilate was very surprised at this.

Every year at the time of Passover the governor would free one prisoner whom the people chose. At that time there was a man in prison, named Barabbas, who was known to be very bad. When the people gathered at Pilate's house, Pilate said, "Whom do you want me to set free: Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Christ?" Pilate knew that the people turned Jesus in to him because they were jealous.

While Pilate was sitting there on the judge's seat, his wife sent this message to him: Don't do anything to that man, because he is innocent. Today I had a dream about him, and it troubled me very much."

But the leading priests and older leaders convinced the crowd to ask for Barabbas to be freed and for Jesus to be killed. Pilate said, "I have Barabbas and Jesus. Which do you want me to set free for you? The people answered, "Barabbas."

Pilate asked, "So what should I do with Jesus, the one called the Christ?" They all answered, "Crucify him!"

When Pilate saw that he could do nothing about this and that a riot was starting, he took some water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. Then, he said, "I am not guilty of this man's death. You are the ones who are causing it!"

All the people answered, "We are our children will be responsible for his death." Then he set Barabbas free. But Jesus was beaten with whips and handed over to the soldiers to be crucified. There were also two criminals led out with Jesus to be put to death. When they came to a place called the Skull, the soldiers crucified Jesus and the criminals—one on his right and the other on his left.

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, because they don't know what they are doing."

The soldiers threw lots to decide who would get his clothes. The people stood there watching. Let him save himself if he is God's chosen One, the Christ."

The soldiers also made fun of him, coming to Jesus and offering him some vinegar. They said, "if you are the king of the Jews, save yourself!" At the top of the cross these words were written: this is the King of the Jews.

One of the criminals on a cross began to shout insults at Jesus: "Aren't you the Christ? Then save yourself and us." But the other criminal stopped him and said, "You should fear God! You are getting the same punishment he is. We are punished justly, getting what we deserve for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong."

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus said to him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."



At noon the whole country became dark, and the darkness lasted for three hours. At three o'clock Jesus cried in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani." This means, "My God, my God, why have you rejected me!"

When some of the people standing there hear this, they said, "Listen! He is calling Elijah." Someone there ran and got a sponge, filled it with vinegar, tied it to a stick, and gave it to Jesus to drink. He said, "We want to see if Elijah will come to take him down from the cross."

Then Jesus cried in a loud voice and died.

The curtain in the Temple was torn into two pieces, from the top to the bottom. When the army officer who was standing in front of the cross saw what happened when Jesus died, he said, "This man really was the Son of God!"

Jesus, remember me, when you come into your Kingdom.

Reflection: A Time of Surrender

**When Jesus had received the wine, he said, “It is finished.”
Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.**

My grandmother found a great sense of peace after she was diagnosed with cancer and went into home hospice. She had reached the point where there was no other choice but to surrender, like Jesus taught.



She deliberately surrendered her life to God and gave her spirit over in trust. It was her moment of uniting with the Christ of Calvary, for Jesus too had his time of total surrender. He knew what it was like to let go completely.

It is not only at the moment of our death that we are asked to trust God with our lives. Day by day we must surrender our fears, worries, doubts and discouragement into the Holy Spirit’s hands, with complete hope that God will never forsake us, even though it may at times feel that way.

Think of what causes you the most anxiety, heartache, and worry. This is your Calvary-connection, your call to surrender. Can you entrust that part of your life to God?

***Jesus Crucified, the final moment of your total surrender
teaches me how to let go with a trusting heart.
I can draw strength from you today.***

As I reflect on the death of Jesus today, I can imagine what a sad day it was for those who loved him, because I still find it difficult to handle the passing of my own loved one. “Gone forever, “ I keep saying to myself. And with that, I ask, “Gone where?” My response? “Gone to be with God forever.”

I’m sure Mary and those who stood with her at the cross also wondered about Jesus after his death. They weren’t even sure where they would bury his body. They had heard Jesus speak of rising, but it was still before the resurrection, after all. On the cross, Jesus clarified what would ultimately happen to him after his death: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” He would return to his Father, who had sent him to us, as one of us.

I want so much to commend my loved one into God’s hands. There the one I have loved will find comfort and complete fulfillment. If this is where Jesus our brother made his eternal dwelling place, my loved one can too.

Mary, Mother of Sorrows

*Mother and son, face to face, suffering in each
one’s heart. We meet the pain in our life,
embracing it with kindness.*

Enduring Love, when we are experiencing troubled times, help us to be attentive to our own spirit. We need to believe that our heartaches are also worthy of a compassionate gaze. Teach us to offer kindness to the part of us that is in pain. With your grace we can overcome any obstacle that keeps us from tending to our needs. Remembering your great love, we turn toward ourselves with compassion and reach out with tenderness as we lovingly embrace the hurting part of our self. We remember who need to offer compassion to their own wound.

Mary, teach us how to be people of faith.



*A mother’s generous lap, holding what remains of
a son, receiving him as lovingly in death as she
first held him, wet from the womb.*

God of the desolate, give your strength and courage to all suffering ones, especially those who feel the ache of a deep loss today. Gently open their hearts and increase their capacity to be with their great hurt. Help them to be a living Pieta of kindness and tenderness. Draw them into your heart so that your deep and strong love will resound in their experience. We remember today those who are experiencing a significant loss.

Mary, teach us how to be people of faith.

THE RESURRECTION

At that time there was a strong earthquake. An angel of the Lord came down from heaven, went to the tomb, and rolled the stone away from the entrance. Then he sat on the stone. He was shining as bright as lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The soldiers guarding the tomb shook with fear because of the angel, and they became like dead men.

The angel said to the women, "Don't be afraid. I know that you are looking for Jesus, who has been crucified. He is not here. He has risen from the dead as he said he would. Come and see the place where his body was. And go quickly and tell his followers, 'Jesus has risen from the dead. He is going into Galilee ahead of you, and you will see him there.'" Then the angel said, "Now I have told you."

The women left the tomb quickly. They were afraid, but they were also very happy. They ran to tell Jesus' followers what had happened. Suddenly, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings." The women came up to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Don't be afraid. Go and tell my followers to go on to Galilee, and they will see me there." Matthew 28-2-10

Imagine how early Mary Magdalene had to get up to get to the tomb. Think of the courage it took to go in the predawn darkness. No street lights to guide her footsteps, no way to see any lurking dangers. It was probably no safer then than it is now for women to be walking alone in the dark. She was in a graveyard, not the most comfy place to be strolling. What love and dedication this woman had. How much she must have loved Jesus to risk doing what she did.

I have always been a follower of Mary Magdalene. How she loved Jesus with all her heart, and through her own conversation, truly embodied the Easter story.

Remember the times you thought you couldn't endure the pain or the loss any longer? It seemed too much to bear. Maybe you are in a situation like that now. At such times it's difficult to believe that grief will be turned into joy. Others can assure us that the pain will pass in time, but usually everything in us doubts this. That's why we need to celebrate Easter continually. We need to recall and welcome the Easter story much more than just once a year.



Easter is a wonderful reminder that we cannot get out of our troubles and our tombs all by ourselves. Even Jesus did not overcome his great obstacles alone. Jesus did not just rise up from the tomb by his own efforts. It was the surrender of Jesus, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" heard so poignantly on the cross, that went with him into the tomb.

The Easter story assures us that we need God's guidance and strength, and we need to let go of our own efforts to try to control life by ourselves. Let us place our hand in God's hand, and trust that God can raise us from our dead place just as Jesus was raised to new life.

We celebrate Easter every time we look closely at the little surprises of joy in our lives. Each time we announce those joys to ourselves and to others, we are like the angels at the empty tomb announcing the resurrection.

