



# CHURCH OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA

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**April 1, 2007**

**Passion Sunday**

## *Holy Week*

I must confess that, until I sat down to write this, I had forgotten that I wrote the Holy Week essay last year. I reread that now and it pretty much says everything I want to say about the holiest week of our year, so, in the interest of full disclosure; what follows is essentially the same essay as last Holy Week.

For almost twenty years my family and I lived in New Rochelle, NY. It was a good place for us – a real city as opposed to a “bedroom suburb,” with lots of diversity (My son and his friends, for example, called themselves the “Rainbow Coalition.”) One of the nice things about New Rochelle was this wonderful diversity. On Saturday mornings, as we would be heading out for the grocery store, or the Cleaners, or any one of the usual Saturday errands, we could not miss our Jewish neighbors walking to Shul. Whole families, all dressed up, walking to worship, or walking home, stopping to talk to friends, with a whole day ahead of them to enjoy each other’s company, to read, to visit, to pray. I confess, I was often jealous.

When I was a child we Catholics had something of that on Sunday. My father didn’t have to work on Sunday, my mother wouldn’t sew or wash, although she did cook a wonderful meal in the middle of the day, which we were all expected to appear for. We children would be in our “good clothes” for the day. And, of course, we all went to Mass.

The Second Vatican Council did many wonderful things, but I’m not so sure Saturday evening Mass was one of them. Sunday seems to have lost its sacred character. Now it’s a day to shop, or play golf, or to catch up on all the chores

we couldn’t do during the week. It’s no longer unusual for people who are not in emergency services to work on Sunday. Soccer schedules and other things have made “Sunday Dinner,” not to mention Mass, an endangered species, if not obsolete.



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the year.*

What does all this have to do with an essay titled “Holy Week”? Well, how will your schedule change this week? We call this HOLY Week, but how is it holy? Will it be a regular work week for you, or are you planning to take some time off on Thursday and Friday to come to Church, to slow down, to reflect on who Jesus is for you, to help your children or grandchildren understand why this week is holy? Will you be at the Easter vigil on Holy Saturday to welcome our new Christians and to renew your own baptismal vows?

The correct Liturgical name for today is “Passion Sunday,” although most of us probably still call it “Palm” Sunday. After all, we get palms at Church today! And the Gospel tells us that this day commemorates Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, when people lined his path with palms. Oh, but that entry was more than just into a city; it was the entry into his Passion and death. So, Passion Sunday it is.

Whatever it’s called, it ushers in for us Christians the holiest week of the year. The liturgical events of this week encapsulate the historical events of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

We begin by processing with the palm, singing of the “Hebrew children” who shouted hosannas as Jesus rode

into Jerusalem on a donkey, hailing him as their king. But then we hear again the whole story, reminding us of what is to come. Lent ends on Wednesday of this week, "Spy Wednesday" in my childhood, since Judas started his nefarious business this day. Lent ends? Yes. The rest of the week is so holy it has its own name, the *Triduum*, the Three Days. They are the key to the life of our entire liturgical calendar. "Considered the holiest of days, the *Triduum* celebrates most fully how we identify ourselves as followers of Jesus and the impact and meaning that it has for our lives." (*What Every Catholic Needs to Know About Lent, Triduum, And Easter*) On these three days we don't have three separate liturgies; we have one. It begins on Holy Thursday night, continues on Good Friday, and ends with the Easter Vigil.

CHRIST,  
OUR  
LIGHT



The Thursday we call Holy commemorates the great gift Jesus gave to all of us on the night before he died; his body and blood in the bread and wine of the Eucharist. In the Holy Thursday Liturgy, celebrated at night (here at 7PM), this great gift is associated with service, as the priest, in imitation of Jesus at the Last Supper, washes the feet of representative parishioners. The Holy Oils of Chrism, Oil of the Sick, and Oil of the Catechumens, blessed by the Cardinal, are received for parish use in the coming year; for Baptisms, Confirmations, the sick, and for those coming into the Church. Hosts are reserved for use tomorrow, Good Friday, when no Eucharistic Liturgy is celebrated, and so the Liturgy does not end but simply continues in silence toward Good Friday.

Friday is "Good" because it reminds us of the great love of God for us in Christ. Many Churches have afternoon "Three Hour" Services from Noon to 3PM, as we do; others have Stations of the Cross, processions, or other devotions, but again the solemn liturgy continues at night (7PM). The Passion story, told this year on Palm Sunday by the Evangelist Luke, is retold on Good Friday from John's Gospel. The Cross is raised high and we all approach to venerate it. Hosts consecrated yesterday at the beginning of the long liturgy are distributed and the altar is left bare, waiting for the lighting of the new fire and the Paschal Candle on Saturday night.

The Easter Vigil begins in the dark (8PM). Suddenly, the new fire bursts into flame and from it is lit the Paschal Candle. This is the candle symbolizing Christ, our Light, which will be used throughout the coming year for baptisms and funerals. The Cantor sings out our joy: "Exultet!" "Rejoice, heavenly powers! Sing, choirs of angels! Exult, all creation around God's throne! Jesus Christ, our King, is risen!" The long, dark night of God's people is over. And so we tell the story once again, beginning with creation, through Noah and Abraham, to Moses and the Prophets, until the bells peal and the *Gloria* rings out our joy and the liturgy begun on Thursday comes to a joyous *alleluia* before the good news: "He is risen! He is risen indeed!" Joyfully, then, we bring those Catechumens who have been elected to join us as his followers to the font to be baptized into his death so that they, too, can rise with him, never to die again. We welcome, too, those candidates who now join the Catechumens to profess their faith in the Catholic Church and to receive the sacrament of Confirmation, and with all of us for reception of our risen Lord, who comes to us in the Sacrament of his own self, the Eucharist. We, in receiving, become, as St. Augustine reminded us, "Who we are." That is, one with Christ and one another. We are sent forth with a triple *Alleluia* to bring this good news to the world.

If you have missed the opportunity to enter deeply into the mystery of these three days in the past, cancel your meetings this week, take some time off, join your fellow Christians, make this week truly "Holy" and sink into the Paschal Mystery. If you do, I promise you, your joy on Easter morning will be unparalleled.

**Mary Naughton, Pastoral Associate**



*Through Faith We Grow*

**On Sunday, April 15, 2007** the Archdiocese of New York proudly commences a year of celebration, culminating in its 200th Anniversary in April 2008