Palm Sunday: The Narthex of Holy Week

Today we begin the most holy and solemn eight days in the Church’s year. Today, Palm Sunday, we “go up” to Jerusalem with the Lord to accompany him as a parish community. As we arrive at 84th & Park, we ascend the stone steps and push open the bronze doors. As Will Rogers said, “It’s not enough to stare up the steps, we must step up the stairs.” Before entering the church proper, however, we must pass through the narthex. Palm Sunday is, I propose, the narthex of Holy Week.

The word narthex is Medieval Latin from the Classical Greek ναρθήξ, “giant fennel, scourge.” It was the place for catechumens and penitents. In Modern Greek, narthekas can mean the brace of a sprained wrist or sling of a broken arm. We come as penitents and pupils, with sprained emotions and broken hearts. We “go up” into the narthex before going up further into the mystery of Easter. The narthex of a church is typically rather dim. But then the door to the church proper swings open, and the real journey begins.

Margaret Visser, in her book The Geometry of Love, explains the fennel reference:

[The vestibule of the church] is known as a narthex, a Greek word meaning “fennel stalk.” In the ancient Mediterranean world, a section of a very large fennel stalk was commonly used as a container. For example, Prometheus in Greek mythology stole fire from the gods on Mount Olympus and gave it to humankind, carrying the hot brand down to us enclosed in a narthex. A perfume box, too, could be made out of a section of a hollow fennel stalk. The front and transitional portion of a church was known in the Greek Christian world as a narthex, a sacred enclosure.

From St. Ignatius Loyola: A Pictorial History and Walking Guide:

Passing through the great bronze outer doors one enters the first interior space, the narthex. Revetted (sheathed) in Bottincina-framed gray Cipollino marble and paved in pink Tennessee marble, the narthex is purposefully subdued, both in color and light, in order to heighten one’s experience of the visual drama waiting beyond the leather-clad inner doors.

Our narthex is a transitional space but also a gathering space, as many nervous brides can attest. Our narthex is also the place where restless children can hear the service without being heard. Our narthex is home to our Christmas Angels and our Lenten Cross. We find here literature for the taking and sign-up sheets for the signing. In the old days, confessions were heard in the narthex, alms were received and distributed here, people ‘checked’ their weapons here!

The U.S. Bishops define the term in their publication, Built of Living Stones:

The narthex is a place of welcome—a threshold space between the congregation’s space and the outside environment. In the early days of the Church, it was a ‘waiting area’ for catechumens and penitents. Today it serves as gathering space as well as the entrance and exit to the building. The gathering space helps believers to make the transition from everyday life to the celebration of the liturgy, and after the liturgy, it helps them return to daily life to live out the mystery that has been celebrated.

Visser brings us closer to our theme of Palm Sunday:

You enter a church at a narthex, an atrium or ‘paradisus’. The narthex is paradise, the place of first disobedience, the end of innocence but also the beginning of the story of the human race. As we step out of the narthex we leave paradise and start the journey up the aisle, representing the length of time humanity has before it, the span each person has to live, to the apse where the journey will be ended and paradise regained. No sooner have we entered than we are presented with a full view of this destination, where the journey will be transfigured and understood.

One of a church’s main purposes is to call to mind, to make people remember. To begin with, a church sets out to cause self-recollection. Every church does its best to help each person recall the mystical experience that he or she has known. On Palm Sunday we recall and re-create the drama of the Lord’s entry into Jerusalem. The curtain rises. On Friday the curtain will be torn from top to bottom. On Sunday the veil will be lifted. The fennel stalk carries fire and perfume, a scourge and a healing balm, people like us. And all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.

— Rev. Michael P. Hilbert, S.J.
Associate Pastor
THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

MONDAY, MARCH 30th
ARCHDIOCESAN DAY OF RECONCILIATION
All parishes in the Archdiocese of New York will offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
Confessions will be heard at St. Ignatius Loyola from 3:00 PM – 6:45 PM.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1st
Daily Masses at 8:30 AM, 12:10 PM, and 5:30 PM:
Quiet Wednesdays.
A few moments to reflect quietly upon the readings of the day (in lieu of a homily).

Job Transition Support Group.
10:00 AM. Parish Lounge.
Bringing together experienced professionals looking to secure employment.

Stations of the Cross for the Parish Community. 7:30 PM. Church.
Details on page 3.

HOLY THURSDAY THROUGH EASTER
For the confession schedule and schedule of liturgies for the Triduum and Easter Sunday, see page 5.

FROM THE PASTOR

Last weekend Fr. Witt spoke at all of the Masses. His announcement is reprinted below.

I have a bit of personal news to share. Our Jesuit Provincial has asked me to take on a new assignment. As of September 1st, I will be joining the Provincial staff in a newly created position. The job description is still in process, but basically I will be working closely with the two East Coast provincials in coordinating our retreat house ministries and other spirituality programs.

This does mean that I will be finishing my tenure as pastor. The plan is for me to finish here in mid-June and then take the summer off for some rest and renewal.

The Provincial will be naming a temporary Administrator for the parish until a new pastor can be found. You will recall that I was Administrator for a year before becoming pastor. Once this is confirmed, I will be able to share the name with you.

Given the fact that I have been here for eight years and am finishing six years as pastor, a new assignment was not wholly unexpected. And while it will be very difficult to leave, such changes are very much part of Jesuit life.

So please know that I am happy with the assignment. And ultimately I believe that the change will be good both for the parish and for me personally.

Of course there are still three months to go. This is not goodbye yet! But I wanted to share this with you now so that we can all be on the same page and prepare well for the period of transition.

Let us continue to pray for one another... now and into the future.

Rev. George M. Witt, S.J.
Pastor

HOSPITALITY MINISTRY

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Holy Thursday, April 2nd:
Mass of the Lord's Supper at 7:00 PM

Good Friday, April 3rd:
Celebration of the Lord's Passion at 7:00 PM

Easter Vigil, Saturday, April 4th at 8:00 PM

Easter Sunday, April 5th:
7:30 AM, 9:00 AM, 10:30 AM (Church & Wallace Hall Family Masses), Solemn Mass at 12:00 Noon

For more information, contact Rob Manning, head of the Hospitality Ministry, at robbiefmanning@gmail.com

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**GOOD FRIDAY**

The **Liturgy for Good Friday** will be celebrated on April 3rd at 7:00 PM. It is the starkest of all liturgies during the year and includes the chanting of the Passion, Veneration of the Cross, and Holy Communion.

Many churches, including St. Ignatius Loyola, also have a **Three Hours Devotion** service from Noon to 3:00 PM to commemorate the time Jesus hung and died on the cross. This devotion includes meditations on the **Seven Last Words** of Jesus from the cross. It does not include Holy Communion.

**THE THREE HOURS DEVOTION**

Good Friday, April 3rd, from Noon to 3:00 PM

“The Seven Last Words of Christ”

A traditional Christian devotion commemorating our Savior’s death, centered around the “seven last words” spoken by Jesus from the cross.

**FIRST WORD:** “Father, Forgive Them”
Brother Dennis Gunn, CFC
Iona College, New Rochelle

**SECOND WORD:** “Today You Will Be With Me In Paradise”
Rev. Glenn Miller
Vice President, SpiriTrust Lutheran Social Services, York, Pennsylvania

**THIRD WORD:** “Woman, Behold Your Son”
Rev. Michael P. Hilbert, S.J.
Associate Pastor, Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, New York City

**FOURTH WORD:** “My God, My God, Why Have You Abandoned Me?”
Rev. W. Alan Briceland, S.J.
Chaplain, Elmhurst Hospital Center, Elmhurst, New York City

**SIXTH WORD:** “Into Your Hands, Lord, I Commend My Spirit”
Rev. Susan E. Hill
Associate Rector, Church of the Holy Apostles, New York City

**SEVENTH WORD:** “It Is Finished”
Sister Mary Lanning, SFCC
Founder, Yes!Solutions Inc., New York City

**Participating Musicians and Choirs**

K. Scott Warren
Robert Reuter, Michael Sheetz, Philip Anderson
Members of the Choir of St. Ignatius Loyola
Canticum Sacrum Parish Community Choir
Wallace Hall Choir
St. Ignatius Loyola Children's Choirs,
Maureen Haley, Director
Sara Murphy, soloist
with
Omega Dance Company
The Easter Vigil

The Easter Vigil liturgy is the most beautiful liturgy in the Roman Catholic Church. Celebrated on Holy Saturday after sunset, the Vigil Mass is regarded as the most important Mass of the liturgical year.

Adults who have never been baptized are baptized at this liturgy. Baptized Christians of other denominations are received into the Church through the sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist. Baptized Roman Catholics who have never had religious instruction are confirmed and receive their First Eucharist.

Because it is so rich with detail, the Vigil Mass usually lasts about three hours. We invite you to attend the Vigil service on Saturday, April 4th! Doors will open at 7:30 PM; the service begins at 8:00 PM. Because the Vigil begins in complete darkness, no latecomers will be admitted into the Church until the end of the “Exultet.”

The Hope and the Heartbreak: The Challenges of Modern Christians in the Land Where Jesus Preached

Tuesday, May 5th at 7:00 PM, Wallace Hall
Presented by Dr. Bishara Ebeid

The Holy Land is a rich mosaic of Christian traditions with dozens of Eastern Christian churches alongside Reformed Christians and Roman Catholics.

How do these church communities support each other and build peace during times of persecution? Dr. Bishara Ebeid will speak from his own experience and the research for his doctoral dissertation presented at the Pontifical Oriental Institute.

A wine and cheese reception and brief presentation on the work of the Gregorian University Foundation by Fr. Alan Fogarty, S.J., President, will follow.

Sponsored by the Gregorian University Foundation & the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola

Bach’s B Minor Mass
Wednesday, May 6th at 7:00 PM
Choir and Orchestra of St. Ignatius Loyola

Monumental, intricate, and full of insight into the widest spectrum of human experience, Bach’s B Minor Mass is widely considered the greatest composition in the Western classical canon. Although completed in 1749, the work was never performed in its entirety during the composer’s lifetime, and did not receive its first full performance until over 100 years later in 1859.

Tickets: $25–$80
Tickets are available online at smssconcerts.org

Announced Masses and Readings for the Week

Monday, March 30th (Monday of Holy Week)
Isaiah 42:1–7    Psalm 27    John 12:1–11
8:30   MEM    Marie Cahill Crawford
12:10   MEM    Therese Baron
5:30   MEM    William Powers

Tuesday, March 31st (Tuesday of Holy Week)
Isaiah 49:1–6    Psalm 71    John 13:21–33, 36–38
8:30   MEM    William & Ann Reilly
12:10   MEM    Oscar de la Renta
5:30   MEM    Mary Clarke

Wednesday, April 1st (Wednesday of Holy Week)
Isaiah 50:4–9a    Psalm 69    Matthew 26:14–25
8:30   MEM    The Choix & Gordon Families
12:10   MEM    Jack Ribas
5:30   MEM    Cono Pasqua

Thursday, April 2nd (Thursday of Holy Week)
Mass of the Lord’s Supper:
Exodus 12:1–8, 11–14    Psalm 116
1 Corinthians 11:23–26    John 13:1–15

Friday, April 3rd (Good Friday)
Celebration of the Lord’s Passion:
Isaiah 52:13–53:12    Psalm 31
Hebrews 4:14–16; 5:7–9    John 18:1–19:42

Saturday, April 4th (Holy Saturday)
Easter Vigil:
Genesis 1:1–2:2    Baruch 3:9–15, 32–4:4
Genesis 22:1–18    Ezekiel 36:16–17a, 18–28
Exodus 14:15–15:1    Romans 6:3–11
Isaiah 54:5–14    Psalm 118
Isaiah 55:1–11    Mark 16:1–7

Sunday, April 5th (Easter Sunday)
Acts 10:3a, 37–43    Colossians 3:1–4
Psalm 118    John 20:1–9

The holy water fonts will be emptied after the Holy Thursday Liturgy and filled again at the end of the Easter Vigil Service. This is in preparation for the blessing of new water during the Easter Vigil.

The Cardinal’s Annual Appeal

Sharing God’s Gifts

The Cardinal’s Appeal offers vital support to Catholic programs and ministries throughout the Archdiocese as well as in our own parish. Please support the Appeal by making your pledge today.

Our goal this year is 400 participants.
As of Friday, March 20th, the current total is 204.

Gifts can be made online at www.cardinalsappeal.org
LITURGIES OF THE TRIDUUM

HOLY THURSDAY, APRIL 2nd
The church will be closed during the morning for set-up and rehearsal. During this time the Lady Chapel will remain open.

Mass of the Lord’s Supper
7:00 PM (doors open at 6:30 PM)
Rev. Thomas H. Feely, S.J., Presider

GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 3rd
The church will be closed until 11:30 AM on Friday morning as it is prepared for the Three Hours Devotion. During this time the Lady Chapel will remain open.

Celebration of the Lord’s Passion
Liturgy at 7:00 PM (doors open at 6:30 PM)
Rev. Michael P. Hilbert, S.J., Presider

HOLY SATURDAY, APRIL 4th
The church will be closed for decorating. The Lady Chapel will remain open all day.

Easter Vigil
8:00 PM (doors open at 7:30 PM)
Rev. George M. Witt, S.J., Presider
For reasons of safety, once the Vigil begins, latecomers will not be admitted into the Church until the end of the “Exultet.” Please be on time.

EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 5th
Please note the change in Mass Times:
7:30 AM – Organ/Cantor
9:00 AM – Organ/Cantor
10:30 AM – Organ/Cantor/Choirs/Brass
10:30 AM (Wallace Hall Family Mass) – Omega Dance Company
Noon (Solemn) – Organ/Cantor/Choirs/Brass
(There is no 7:30 PM Mass on Easter Sunday.)
PARISH STAFF

Pastor
Rev. George M. Witt, S.J.

Associate Pastors
Rev. William J. Bergen, S.J.
Rev. Thomas H. Feely, S.J.
Rev. Michael P. Hilbert, S.J.

Pastoral Associates
Joanne Cunneen
Carly-Anne Gannon
Kathryn King, F.S.P.

Assisting Priests (Sunday)
Rev. Philip G. Judge, S.J.
Rev. James Martin, S.J.
Rev. Anthony P. SooHoo, S.J.

Music Ministries
Scott Warren, Director
Nancianne Parrella
Robert Reuter
Michael Sheetz
Maureen Haley
Philip Anderson
Sara Murphy, Administrator

Staff information: on the website at music/music staff

Assistant to the Pastor
Diane M. Boyle

Administrative Assistant
Patricia Schneider

Communications Coordinator
Elizabeth O'Sullivan

Asst. to the Director of Facilities
Caroline Fernandes

Treasurer
Fernando Castro

Religious Education for Children
Ms. Carly-Anne Gannon, M.Phil., M.Ed.
Director
(212) 861-4764

St. Ignatius Loyola Grammar School
Ms. Mary Larkin, Principal
M.S. Ed. (Admin.), M.S. Ed. (Literacy)
48 East 84th Street
New York, NY 10028
(212) 861-3820  Fax: (212) 879-8248

St. Ignatius Loyola Day Nursery
Ms. Theodora Crist, M.S.
Executive Director
240 East 84th Street
New York, NY 10028
(212) 734-6427  Fax: (212) 734-6972

Children's Liturgy of the Word:
Sundays at the 11:00 AM Mass in Wallace Hall.

Centering Prayer:
Mondays at 6:30 PM

Confessions:
4:30 PM Saturday or by appointment.
Mondays during Lent
6:30 PM – 8:00 PM in the Church
Parish Lenten Reconciliation Service
Monday, March 30th at 7:00 PM

Baptisms: Please call Joanne Cunneen at the Parish House (212-288-3588 x632) to arrange for a Baptism and the preparation given prior to Baptism.

Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults:
Contact Maureen Fullam, M.A., Director, at the Parish House.

Marriages: The Bride or Groom should call Joanne Cunneen at the Parish House (212-288-3588 x632) to begin preparation for Marriage, normally one year in advance.

Visits to the Sick: Please contact the Parish House between the hours of 9:00 AM and 9:00 PM.

Music Information: (212) 288-2520  Email: music@stignatiusloyola.org

Way of the Cross over the Brooklyn Bridge
On Good Friday, April 3rd, Communion and Liberation will sponsor the Way of the Cross over the Brooklyn Bridge.

Participants will congregate for the first station at St. James Cathedral, Brooklyn, at 10:00 AM. After a station on the Brooklyn Bridge, the procession will follow the cross to a third station at City Hall Park in Manhattan and a fourth station near Ground Zero. The final station will be at St. Peter’s Church on Barclay Street, concluding at 1:30 PM.

At each station, there will be readings from the Passion, a meditation, a reflection, and hymns. All are invited.

For more information, call Communion and Liberation at (212) 337-3580 or visit www.wocbrooklynbridge.org

Sunday Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.
Every Sunday (except the month of July) following the 12:00 PM Noon Mass and at 5:30 PM. Saint Joseph’s Church, 404 East 87th Street. An opportunity for quiet prayer and silent adoration. All are welcome.

For your convenience...
To reach the Giving page on the parish website, scan the QR Code at left with your smartphone’s camera.