

RCIA – The Paschal Mystery and Final Preparation

Unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains only a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it produces much fruit.

Opening Prayer: Collect for Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord:

Almighty and ever-living God, who as an example of humility for the human race to follow caused our Savior to take flesh and submit to the Cross, graciously grant that we may heed His lesson of patient suffering and so merit a share in His Resurrection. Who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

Song: Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

• Catechism References for Further Reflection:

- Jesus handed over according to the definitive plan of God: CCC 599-605
- Christ offered /Himself to His Father for our sins: CCC 606-609
- Jesus freely embraced the Father's redeeming love: CCC 609
- The Last Supper when Jesus freely offers His life: CCC 610-611
- Jesus' agony in the Garden of Gethsemani: CCC 612
- Christ's death – the Paschal Sacrifice: CCC 612-616
- Our participation in Christ's sacrifice: CCC 618

1. Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, “This month shall stand at the head of your calendar; you shall reckon it the first month of the year. Tell the whole community of Israel: On the tenth of this month every one of your families must procure for itself a lamb, one apiece for each household. If a family is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join the nearest household in procuring one and shall share in the lamb in proportion to the number of persons who partake of it. The lamb must be a year-old male and without blemish. You may take it from either the sheep or the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, and then, with the whole assembly of Israel present, it shall be slaughtered during the evening twilight. They shall take some of its blood and apply it to the two doorposts and the lintel of every house in which they partake of the lamb. That same night they shall eat its roasted flesh with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. “This is how you are to eat it: with your loins girt, sandals on your feet and your staff in hand, you shall eat like those who are in flight. It is the Passover of the LORD. For on this same night I will go through Egypt, striking down every firstborn of the land, both man and beast, and executing judgment on all the gods of Egypt—I, the LORD! But the blood will mark the houses where you are. Seeing the blood, I will pass over you; thus, when I strike the land of Egypt, no destructive blow will come upon you. “This day shall be a memorial feast for you, which all your generations shall celebrate with pilgrimage to the LORD, as a perpetual institution.”

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

2. 1st Corinthians (11:23-29):

I received from the Lord what I handed on to you, namely, that the Lord Jesus on the night in which he was betrayed took bread, and after he had given thanks, broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way after the supper, he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” Every time, then, you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes!

This means that whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily sins against the body and blood of the Lord. A man should examine himself first; only then should he eat of the bread and drink of the cup. He who eats and drinks without recognizing the body eats and drinks a judgment on himself.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why is the Holy Eucharist called the Christian Passover? How are these two religious ceremonies alike? How are they different?
2. Why is Jesus called the Lamb of God?
3. What does the blood on the door posts mean to the Hebrews in bondage? What does the blood on the door posts mean to Christians when they read this story?
4. Why is Holy Communion both the source and the summit of our spiritual lives as Christians?
5. How do we receive Holy Communion “worthily”?
6. For the Catholics: What would you tell someone joining the Church about the importance of the Eucharist to you personally?
7. To those about to join the Church: What are you most looking forward to?

3. St. Paul’s Letter to the Philippians (2:5-11)

Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

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

4. Mark 14: 32-42

They went then to a place named Gethsemani. “Sit down here while I pray,” he said to his disciples; at the same time he took along with him Peter, James and John. Then he began to be filled with fear and distress. He said to them, “My heart is filled with sorrow to the point of death. Remain here and stay awake.” He advanced a little and fell to the ground, praying that if it were possible this hour might pass him by. He kept saying,

“Abba (O Father), you have the power to do all things. Take this cup away from me. But let it be as you would have it, not as I.”

When he returned he found them asleep. He said to Peter, “Asleep, Simon? You could not stay awake for even an hour? Be on guard and pray that you may not be put to the test. The spirit is willing but nature is weak.” Going back again he began to pray in the same words.

Once again he found them asleep on his return. They could not keep their eyes open, nor did they know what to say to him. He returned a third time and said to them, “Still sleeping? Still taking your ease? It will have to do. The hour is on us. You will see that the Son of Man is to be handed over to the clutches of evil men. Rouse yourselves and come along. See! My betrayer is at hand!”

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

5. Hebrews 5: 7-10:

In the days when he was in the flesh, he offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to God who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered; and when perfected, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, designated by God as high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

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

6. Luke 23:32-43

When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him and the criminals there, one on his right, the other on his left. Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.” They divided his garments by casting lots. The people stood by and watched; the rulers, meanwhile, sneered at him and said, “He saved others, let him save himself if he is the chosen one, the Christ of God.” Even the soldiers jeered at him. As they approached to offer him wine they called out, “If you are King of the Jews, save yourself.” Above him there was an inscription that read, “This is the King of the Jews.”

Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us.” The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, “Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” He replied to him, “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

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

7. Mark 15: 33-41

When noon came, darkness fell on the whole countryside and lasted until midafternoon. At that time Jesus cried in a loud voice, “*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachtani?*” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? A few of the bystanders who heard it remarked, “Listen! He is calling on Elijah!” Someone ran off, and soaking a sponge in sour wine, stuck it on a reed to try to make them drink. The man said, “Now let’s see whether Elijah comes to take him down.”

Then, Jesus, uttering a loud cry, breathed his last. At that moment the curtain in the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. The centurion who stood guard over him, on seeing the manner of his death, declared, “Clearly this man was the Son of God!”

Questions for Discussion:

- Why did Jesus have to die? Why did he have to humble himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross?
- What do you think Jesus suffered during his passion and death? After all, he was God, could he really suffer as we do?
- What do you think it means when Christians speak of the “Paschal Mystery”?
- Why is the Cross the central symbol of Christianity rather than the empty tomb?
- What do you think Jesus means when he says that his followers must pick up their crosses and follow him?

8. John 20: 11-18

Meanwhile, Mary stood weeping beside the tomb. Even as she wept, she stooped to peer inside, and there she saw two angels in dazzling robes. One was seated at the head and the other at the foot of the place where Jesus’ body had lain. “Woman,” they asked her, “why are you weeping?” She answered the, “Because the Lord has been taken away, and I do not know where they have put him.” She had no sooner said this than she turned around and caught sight of Jesus standing there. But she did not know him. “Woman,” he asked her, “why are you weeping? Who is it you are looking for?” She supposed he was the gardener, so she said, “Sir, if you are the one who carried him off, tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away.” Jesus said to her “Mary!” She turned to him and said, “*Rabbouni!*” (meaning “Teacher”). Jesus then said “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Rather, go to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God!’” Mary Magdalene went to the disciples. “I have seen the Lord! She announced. Then she reported what he had said to her.

9. Romans 6:3-14

Are you not aware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Through baptism into his death we were buried with him, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life. If we have been united with him through likeness to his death, so shall we be through a like resurrection. This we know: our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed and we might be slaves to sin no longer. A man who is dead has been

freed from sin. If we have died with Christ, we believe that we are also to live with him. We know that Christ, once raised from the dead, will never die again; death has no more power over him. His death was death to sin, once for all; his life is life for God. In the same way, you must consider yourselves dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus. Do not, therefore, let sin rule your mortal body, and make you obey its lusts; no more shall you offer the members of your body to sin as weapons for evil. Rather, offer yourselves to God, as men who have come back from the dead to life and your bodies to God as weapons for justice.

Questions for Discussion:

- How is Baptism connected to the Paschal Mystery?
- How is the commitment we make at Confirmation and in the Eucharist part of living out the Paschal Mystery?
- How must the lives of Christians be different because of their being one with Christ in Baptism?

Discussion of Holy Week

Closing Prayer

April 6, 2023: Holy Thursday: Mass of the Lord's Supper, 7 pm at SJ

April 7, 2023: Good Friday Service – 3:00 pm at SJ or 7:00 pm at IC

April 8, 2023: Holy Saturday

- Prayer and Preparation/Rehearsal at 10:00 am at SJ
- The Great Paschal Vigil, 8:00 pm at SJ (arrive NLT 7:45 pm)

April 12, 2023: Mystagogy of the Rites of Initiation and review of the RCIA Journey

April 19, 2023: Discipleship

April 26, 2023: Closing Pot Luck Meal