

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

March 26, 2010

The week we call Holy stretches before us. In this week the Church celebrates some of most ancient and certainly the most beautiful rites in its treasury of spirituality. Certainly, these are the most important days of the whole church year, even though they don't get tagged as "days of obligation."

Lent ends at sundown on Thursday of this week and with the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, the *Paschal Triduum* begins. The *Triduum* (3 days) consists of one feast which is celebrated over three days. The "three days" are numbered from sundown Holy Thursday to sundown Good Friday; from sundown Good Friday to sundown Holy Saturday; and from sundown Holy Saturday to sundown Easter Sunday. The high points of that one feast are the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Thursday night, the Solemn Celebration of the Lord's Passion on Friday and the Easter Vigil (the greatest and first Mass of Easter) on Holy Saturday night. (Mass on Easter Sunday is a spill over of the joy of the Triduum!) The Triduum closes with Evening Prayer on Easter Sunday night.

Yes, these liturgies are lengthy but they are also rich and beautiful in symbol, prayer, song and ritual. It is a shame that many Catholics go to their death without ever having celebrated the most important feasts of their faith!

On Holy Thursday the Evening Mass at 7:30 p.m. includes the washing of feet, a gesture which Jesus left us in St. John's account of the Last Supper. In our parish, any individual may come forward to have his or her feet washed and then to wash the feet of the next person in line. (A number of people will do this and a number of people will choose not to – it's an option and remaining in one's place and praying and singing during this time is fine, too.) At the end this liturgy, there will be a procession with the Blessed Sacrament around the church. (Since the chapel in the basement is still not usable, we will not be able to reserve the Blessed Sacrament there.) The church will remain open until midnight for any who wish to come and pray before the Blessed Sacrament reserved on the main altar.

On Good Friday a children's service will be offered at 3:00 p.m. This service is a much-simplified version of the liturgy offered in the evening at 7:30. At the Solemn Evening liturgy the gospel of the Passion of Christ is proclaimed, the annual solemn prayers of intercession are offered, the Cross is brought into the church in a procession and all are invited to come forward to venerate it; Communion is given from the sacrament reserved in the chapel from the previous evening. (The children's service is a simple version of the first three elements of the evening service; Communion is not given at the afternoon service.)

The liturgy of the Easter Vigil begins at 8:00 p.m. outdoors (parking lot entrance) with the lighting of the new fire and the Paschal Candle. A candle light procession enters the church and the Exsultet (hymn of Easter praise) is sung. Then there is a vigil of readings tracing salvation history up to the resurrection of Jesus. We have no baptisms to celebrate at the Vigil this year so the Vigil will be less lengthy than usual. After the readings we will bless the Easter water, renew baptismal promises, receive Steve Shirley into full communion with the Catholic Church and celebrate Easter Eucharist.

Mass on Easter morning will be at the usual times. Fr. Michael Medas will celebrate the 7:30 Mass for which I'm most grateful. At the 11:30 Mass we will baptize Johannes Beckwith, the newborn son of Andrea Laux, our Coordinator of Youth Ministry, and her husband, Ben Beckwith. Our celebration of the Triduum will conclude with Evening Prayer at 7:00 p.m. Very few parishes offer Evening Prayer and I am pleased that we do. Easter Evening Prayer is a candle light service with song, incense, prayer and scripture, followed by a brief concert of seasonal music, featuring Ellen Oak and Carol Messina with works by Chopin, Debussy, Rorem, Thompson and from Gregorian Chant. (*Free will offering to benefit KIVA, providing microloans to indigent entrepreneurs. See www.KIVA.org*)

As you know from my letters since before the beginning of Lent, the Archdiocese of Boston is sponsoring a program in which there will be a priest available for confessions in every church and chapel of the

archdiocese on the Wednesday nights of Lent: February 24 and March 3, 10, 17, 24 and **31** from **6:30 - 8:00 p.m.** Our parish is participating in this effort on those dates and at the prescribed time.

Perhaps there are some folks who might come to prayer this week if YOU invited them, if YOU offered a ride, if YOU let them know that we'd love to have them join us. It's a beautiful and simple way to spread the faith and draw others back to it...

Hope to see you often this week!

A blessed Holy Week and a Happy Easter to you all!

Sincerely,
Fr. Fleming