

A HOLY WEEK REFLECTION - AN EASTERTIME HOPE

In two weeks, I'll return to the series on the *New Roman Missal* with more observations concerning the prayer we celebrate together day after day. But for now, I thought I'd offer a simple reflection on the past, present and future.

The Triduum at St. Joseph is a most impressive time, primarily because of your reverence and prayerful participation. Before I came here, it had been many years since I had seen so many participating in the *Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper* on Holy Thursday. The evening service of Good Friday wasn't so well-attended, but I know that many came to pray *The Way of the Cross* in the afternoon, so the attendance at the combined services would have nearly filled the church.

The Veneration of the Cross at the Good Friday *Solemn Celebration of the Lord's Passion and Death* is always so moving because I have the privilege of watching parishioners of all ages—from toddlers led by their parents to seniors with canes—come forward to reverence the Cross. I know the pains and struggles of some, but I can only begin to imagine the worries & challenges that others bring to the Cross of Jesus—as well as prayers of gratitude for blessings received. I'm writing this before the celebration of the great *Easter Vigil* (and hoping that the rain holds off!); but I know that even if the church isn't overflowing for this long and astonishingly beautiful night of prayer, the spirit of our community, supported by the beautiful sounds of our Music Ministry and enhanced by the creativity and hard work of our Liturgy Environment Committee, will be a fitting conclusion to the great Three Days.

But now, we're just at the beginning of Eastertime, which reaches its climax in the *Solemnity of Pentecost* on June 4th. It's so important to remember that, while the Church invites us to spend **forty** days in more intense prayer, fasting and almsgiving during Lent, she gives us **fifty** days to celebrate the new life which is ours through the dying and rising of Jesus. This year in particular, as we recognize the gift that our school has been to the parish for over ninety years and honor its last weeks of service to our community, we need to embrace more than ever the promise of new life with which our Risen Lord has blessed us.

The *Paschal Mystery* teaches us that death is never the last word in our spiritual vocabulary. In the closing of this chapter in the life of our parish, a new chapter begins—with a re-energized Religious Education program, the possibility of a revived Youth Ministry program, continuing and perhaps expanded Adult Formation, a new Parish Pastoral Council and God only knows what else. And that's just it: only God knows what blessings will be ours in the coming months and years. It's up to all of us to trust in God's grace at work in our lives, to embrace the enlivening power of the Holy Spirit, and to walk confidently with the Lord Jesus whose risen life we share.

Fr. Bob

