

Dear Friends,

We have come to the end of our Lenten pilgrimage. Celebrating Passion/Palm Sunday, we enter into Holy Week. This week is different than all the rest, though in our culture it is not necessarily the case. While we begin the most important week of the year, the rest of society goes along doing business as usual.

Often, I have been asked the question by people from different locales where Holy Week is celebrated with fervor, "*Have you ever been there Father?*" Whether it be Spain, Mexico, the Philippines, etc., there are places where there is a special solemnity and specific traditions that are associated with Holy Week. In these places, these days, are holidays (Holy Days). For some immigrants, the thought of working on Good Friday is unthinkable considering what happened that day and that their whole life experience has been lived by setting that day aside to pray and focus on the significance of the passion and death of Jesus.

What can we do to live Holy Week differently? This is a question for each of us to ponder. With God's help, we can each make a plan to enter more fully into the mysteries by our participation in the passion and death of Jesus, so that we might experience more profoundly the power of His resurrection. With this intention, I encourage you to make a plan for this week. Can you attend the liturgies of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil? Have you ever attended all of them? What can you do as a family to commemorate these events in the life of Jesus in a concrete way in the home? Prayer is the key and God will guide you to start your own personal and family traditions. It can be as simple as a daily reading from the Bible and prayer focusing on the Last Supper and the passion and death of Jesus. Following Jesus' example, you could wash each other's feet on Holy Thursday. You could spend an hour with Jesus after the Mass of the Lord's Supper praying with Him and keeping Him company as He is abandoned by His disciples. On Friday, you could come for the Stations of the Cross at 3:00 pm (the hour of Jesus' death) or come early for the Veneration of the Cross in the evening to experience the live Stations at 5:00 pm before the liturgy at 7:00 pm.

From Good Friday through Holy Saturday, we ought to keep the Paschal Fast. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of Vatican II states: "*Let the paschal fast be kept sacred. Let it be observed everywhere on Good Friday and, where possible, prolonged throughout Holy Saturday, as a way of coming to the joys of the Sunday of the resurrection with uplifted and welcoming heart.*" (# 110) For those who are able, I encourage you to fast these two days as a way to enter more deeply into the mystery of Christ's death and descent to the dead. For families, you can continue to abstain from meat and make meals more simple in preparation for the coming festivity of Easter. And this fast is not just from food, but also from work (if possible), entertainment, and anything that distracts us from focusing on entering more deeply into the passion and death of Jesus.

I pray you all have a blessed Holy Week, as we prepare our hearts for the most important event in the history of the universe.

In His most Sacred Heart,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fr. Jack Shrum', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Fr. Jack Shrum
Pastor