



On behalf of parish pastoral and administrative teams we wish you the joy and peace of the risen Christ this Easter.

Together, we give thanks to God for each of you who will enrich our Holy Week and Triduum in creating a rich ambience of sight and sound and service.

Through your gift of time and talent the Lord, we pray, will become a tangible presence among us as a Eucharistic community of missionary disciples.

*May the presence of the risen Lord be in your hearts and homes this Easter.
Christ is risen, Alleluia: He is risen indeed, Alleluia.*

Making a home place for this worshipping community in Holy Week.

The Sense of Home

The poet, Sir Walter Scott in his *Lay of the Last Minstrel, Canto VI*, (My Native Land) wrote the following lines:

*Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land!
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burn'd
As home his footsteps he hath turn'd.*

Making a home for the Lord

This great week in the church's year is about home-making, making a home for the Lord and making a home for each other. The **Hebrew Pasch** was, and is, a family feast, celebrated not in the Temple but at home. At the time of Exodus home was a place of salvation, the place of protection against death. In Jesus time the lamb was immolated in the Temple but the Pasch was celebrated at home. Jesus with his apostles is a new family, a pilgrim group celebrating Passover together.

Becoming nomads

The church translated *Pascha* as passage, Christ's journey through death and, therefore, a feast of pilgrimage. We are only guests on the earth and so there is a call to join with others as fellow guests. Jesus is also a guest and a nomad on the earth. He calls us to be available to the suffering, the neglected, the prisoners and the displaced. Jesus is present in them all. Earth is not a final destination. If we are nomads, we become free and detached.

Jesus as Nomad

Jesus too goes out. He went out into the night, into the depths, even into the jaws of death. He descended into hell. This is not a time for circling the wagons. We must live in an open city. Go out with Jesus into the night. Have no fear. He is stronger. He has gone there already and we follow him. We know that he sent them out to all the places he himself was to visit. So, we are never alone.

We join Jesus in his lonely journey on Holy Thursday night

At the end of the Liturgy on Holy Thursday we imitate the journey of Jesus as we enter the loneliness of Gethsemane. It is an invitation to go with Jesus, an invitation to all who are lonely, captive or in anguish.

Jesus becomes our personal home-maker

These three days are about accepting God's love and the call to bring that love to others in the form of service. Jesus leaves us an example to follow in the washing of the feet. He washes the soiled feet of humanity to make us fit for table. It is a way of uniting us, as flawed humanity. It sums up the whole life of Jesus as servant. He rises from the table, casts aside his garments of glory and bends down to us.

Jesus invites us to be at home with him – he wishes to wash our feet

If we accept the washing, we say '**yes**' to God's love. Judas could not accept this love. (Each one of us must humbly accept this act of service and love and not to be like the eldest son in Luke 15.) In these three days leading to the Easter Triduum our community becomes a home of love. Love is merely theory until put to the test in the here and now, among the people with whom we live, work and pray. Of course we fail in love and service. Yet we cannot isolate ourselves from the world or from others. We have to **walk the walk** each day and so our feet walk on the soil of this world. When we say, "forgive us our trespasses" we ask Jesus to take a towel and wash our feet each day.

Where there is a home, there will be death.

In these three days we bring our solitude, our sense of fragility, our mortality into contact with Christ who engages fully with our humanity.

Jesus turns loneliness to solitude this week; death is now overcome.

Isolation, fear and abandonment are all the ingredients of death. Therefore, Jesus died praying. (Psalm 22: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?") In the Last supper we have the **transubstantiation of death**. In the Eucharist we receive the "**medicine of immortality**." To be human, means going towards death. Jesus walked towards death. To live means, in this world, to die. Moments of solitude in the life of Jesus are moments of death. We need to enter into the loneliness and solitude of Jesus in these three days. Death in the life of Jesus is a temporary interruption in his relationship with his Father. It is a terrifying moment of disconnection.

God was made man. He is man and remains man forever. That means that man (the person) is in God forever. You and I are in God forever. (How privileged are we?) (In Jesus we have the death of death, the death of our death.)

Holy Week – into the great silence

It would be wonderful if we could adopt the dispositions of the reflection from **Desiderata** for Holy Week:

Go placidly amid the noise and the haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even to the dull and the ignorant; they too have their story.

Only in silence will we be able to join Jesus in his journey from death to life this week.

Monday:

Jesus is in Bethany, the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. He is within sight of Jerusalem. **Bethany becomes the place of rest and comfort.** e. Mary anoints the feet of Jesus with costly nard. The house is filled with the fragrance of the perfume. After the example of Mary Magdalen we are invited to let go of what is superfluous in our lives, to the benefit of those who have less.

Tuesday:

The gospel today speaks of the forthcoming betrayal by Judas.

“Now is the Son of Man glorified.” Jesus is glorified in his betrayal and humiliation.

Wednesday:

Today, the account of the betrayal continues. Judas, was unable to accept that Jesus loved him personally and with the same love as he loved Peter and the others.

Holy Thursday:

With Peter we have to pray for the grace of conversion and humility to allow Jesus and others to wash our feet. Here we have echoes of the hymn, *“Will you let me be your servant; let me be as Christ to you; pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too.”* (David Haas)

Good Friday:

For three hours Mary ponders on the sign above her Son’s head, ‘Jesus of Nazareth’. She thinks of displacement, of those thirty years of peace in Nazareth and the first steps on the pilgrimage beginning with a wedding feast in Cana. She prays with, and for, all displaced people in the world or all who have lost a sense of home this day.

Holy Saturday:

This is the day of hope. Mary is the bridge between the Good Fridays and, hopefully, the Easter Sundays, for which we long, in our lives. (Tradition also has it that Mary spent this day visiting and consoling the mother of Judas assuring her of her Son’s words of mercy on the Cross: “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

The Vigil

This is the journey from darkness to light. This is the night when our story is told from the beginning. We enter the tomb of Jesus, the font of Baptism, to rise with him to new life.

Easter Sunday – putting on our Easter clothes

Mary Magdalen is the first witness of the resurrection – she supposes him to be the gardener, the gardener of her soul. (Note Utrillo’s painting to this effect.) The cloth around the head of Jesus is rolled up and put in a place by itself – in contrast with Lazarus, Jesus, now risen, will never die again. (The cloth is now surplus to requirement!)

In joy we proclaim the triple Alleluia: Christ is risen alleluia; He is risen indeed, Alleluia.

Michael McCullagh c.m. Easter 2019