

Easter Week at St. John's Parish



Saturday Cleaning and Making Palm Crosses

Thank You to everyone who came out to get everything ready, especially to The Boy Scout Troop 76, the Cub Scout Troop 42 along with their leaders and parents who worked alongside our congregation to ensure that our Church grounds looked great for Palm Sunday and Easter



Palm Sunday

Holy week begins with Palm Sunday or Sunday of the Passion. The liturgy begins in the church yard with a blessing of the palms and the congregation procession to the church to commemorate the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. The service reading includes the complete story of the Passion. As Father Greg spoke of, it's a schizophrenic day, between the crowd's joyful greeting of their king shouting "Hosanna" and then their condemnation with "Crucify him!"



Our Video from Palm Sunday in the Church Yard.

Maundy Thursday

The beginning of the great three days of the Pascal celebration leading to the resurrection at the Easter Vigil. The evening setting ends with the stripping of the Altar and all decorative furnishings are removed from the church in recognition of the despair and death to come.

Peace is my last gift to you, my own peace I now leave with you; peace which the world cannot give, I give to you. I give you a new commandment: Love one another as I have loved you. Peace is my last gift to you, my own peace I now leave with you; peace which the world cannot give, I give to you. By this shall the world know that you are my disciples: That you have love for one another.



Good Friday

Rev. Greg Snyder. My prayer for us is drawn from our reading from the Book of Hebrews:

19 Therefore, brothers [and sisters], since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, **20** by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, **21** and since we have a great priest over the house of God, **22** let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. **23** Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. **24** And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, **25** not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Amen!



Good Friday Sermon. Rev. Greg Snyder

It is a very interesting aspect of John's Gospel that there is no mention of the crowd that stood on Golgotha watching the crucifixion. In contrast, Matthew's Gospel (chapter 27) says,

*And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. **36** Then they sat down and **kept watch over him** there. **37** And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." **38** Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. **39** And **those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads** **40** and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." **41** So also **the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him**, saying, **42** "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. **43** He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" **44** And **the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way....***

The Death of Jesus

***46** And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice,... "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" **47** And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, "This man is calling Elijah." **48** And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. **49** But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." **50** And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit....*

***54** When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"*

55 There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him, 56 among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

There is a great deal of interaction with the crowd and much is made of it in Matthew's Gospel. Soldiers "*kept watch*" over Jesus, passersby "*derided*" Him "*wagging their heads*" at Him, the chief priests, scribes, and elders mocked Him and His words, and the Roman centurion witnessed that "*Truly this was the Son of God.*" And, of course, the women of his group were "*looking from a distance*" and weeping. In like manner, **(Mark's Gospel 15:22-41)** speaks of the abuse hurled by bystanders and religious people.

Luke's Gospel is similar, but it is only in that Gospel that the account of the crucifixion ends with this passage, **48** And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. **49** And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.

The crowd that had just wagged their heads and mocked God Himself, once the deed was done, had "*returned home beating their breasts.*" An amazing turn of events, not unlike what we saw on Palm Sunday compared with earlier on Good Friday...from euphoria and "*Hosanna*" to "*Crucify Him*" and now back again to realizing that "*Truly this was the Son of God.*"

I reflect on this in response to what I saw earlier this week in Paris, France. One of the greatest Christian churches in the whole world built in the 12th and 13th centuries, so some 800 years old, nearly burned to the ground on Monday. And I was touched and a bit surprised by the outpouring of pain and sadness by the French people, and even those throughout Europe...The people of Paris lined the streets and the river Seine as they watch the great conflagration.

We have known that for over a generation now, Europeans, and most especially the French, have become more and more secular, and that the vast majority of Christian churches in Europe sit empty or nearly so on Sunday mornings. We also know that the Constitution of the European Union never once mentions Christianity. So why the outpouring...I think the cathedral represents the soul of Europe, the soul of the people corporately, but also individually, and it has been neglected for a generation or more.

Some were comparing this to the falling of the Twin Towers in New York some 18 years ago, except that the World Trade Centers involved a terrorist attack and the loss of much life, over 3000 souls. So, why the great outpouring then...over a building? It is an old building, nearly a museum, so one could miss the museum or the ancient building, but not with tears in one's eyes. One Parisian resident spoke of how he had walked past the Cathedral every day for decades on his way to work. How he had always felt the strength and the solidity and the eternity of this massive building as he walked by, but that he had never attended services there or ever been in it. But, now that it was gone, or nearly so, he felt a deep sadness and pain. Again, why is this?

Again, I think it is because of what it represents and I also believe that it touches a deep place in the soul of every European, and every Christian worldwide. This is their heritage, and it is a heritage that is based on Christianity and by extension Christ Himself...and it is a heritage that has nearly been lost. Notre Dame Cathedral is a deep and stirring reminder of that heritage. Jesus Himself said, on the night before He would die, while celebrating Holy Eucharist for the first time, "This do in REMEMBRANCE of me." And as many of you have heard me say many times before, this word, "remembrance" is not just a memory but a re-enacting of the original event, as if it were happening all over again today. I believe that this is what has been tapped in

the European soul. A deep longing for the remembrance of Christ and His Church. I pray that France and Europe will be awakened by this tragedy, and no longer take for granted that the Church will always be there for them.

And so, it is with us also. Every year we memorialize this week, Christ's pilgrimage to the cross, and every year I go home beating my breast after this worship service. And it is not because I think there is no hope, because I know how this will end up in just a few days. But, it is because I have not really taken Christ's call on my life and His sacrifice for me as seriously as I should. And all too often I too am standing at a distance watching these things, and not involved with the life of the Church and surely not involved with Christ's calling on my life.

Easter Sunday

He is risen, he is risen!
Tell it out with joyful voice:
he has burst his three days'
prison;
let the whole wide earth rejoice:
death is conquered, we are free,
Christ has won the victory.

Come, ye sad and fearful-hearted,
with glad smile and radiant brow!
Lent's long shadows have
departed;
Jesus' woes are over now,
and the passion that he bore--
sin and pain can vex no more.

Come, with high and holy
hymning,
hail our Lord's triumphant day;
not one dark-some cloud is
dimming
yonder glorious morning ray,
breaking o'er the purple east,
symbol of our Easter feast.

He is risen, he is risen!
He hath opened heaven's gate:
we are free from sin's dark prison,
risen to a holier state;
and a brighter Easter beam
on our longing eyes shall stream.



Easter Monday

Easter Sunday marks the beginning of the great fifty-day feast celebrating the Resurrection of Christ and all that means for us, leading to the launch of the Christian Church and mission on Pentecost. Today Jesus was alive and showed himself to his disciples, and many more others during the next forty days before ascending, and then followed ten more days until Pentecost.



Alleluia! Christ is risen!

**“Grant we pray, Almighty God,
that we who celebrate with
reverence the Paschal feast
may be worthy to attain
everlasting joys”**

April 20, 2019