

Through our observance of Lent you correct our faults and raise our minds to you, you help us grow in holiness, and offer us the reward of everlasting life.

- Preface for Lent IV

Guide for beginning of Holy Week: April 1-4, 2007

The First Four Days of Holy Week

On **Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion** we make our way into **Holy Week**. We read the gospel about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, Paul's invitation to us to imitate Jesus who emptied himself, and the whole **Passion**, this year from **Luke's Gospel**.

The next three days - Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of this week - are the final days of Lent. The first readings are from the **Suffering Servant Songs of Isaiah**. Though originally sung about Israel, God's servant, and perhaps a specific servant, they clearly spoke to the early Christian community about Jesus and his mission.

Monday and Tuesday's gospels are from **John's Gospel**. The anointing at Bethany - at the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus - has taken place at a wonderful celebration of Lazarus' return to life and a fine thanksgiving to Jesus. Mary anoints Jesus' feet with the precious oil that reminds us of his burial. Then, at the Last Supper (skipping over the reading we will use on Holy Thursday about the washing of feet) Jesus identifies his betrayer. Finally, Jesus talks with Peter who professes his loyalty to Jesus who predicts Peter would deny him three times later that night.

Wednesday's Gospel is the story of Judas' betrayal of Jesus, from **Matthew's** perspective. We can feel the tension and pressure Jesus is under. There is a sadness at hearing the arrangement Judas makes - 30 pieces of silver - to deliver Jesus into the hands of his enemies.

The stage is now set for the Triduum - Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

Daily Prayer This Week

This is the week we call "Holy" because it is a memorial of God's saving deeds for us in Jesus. There is a solemn nature to this week. We might be tempted to be sad or conflicted this week. It is not easy to get close to the reality that we are sinners and our Lord and Savior went through this betrayal, suffering and death for us. So, sometimes, we avoid looking at this week closely, and praying with it, because we fear getting into our guilt. The invitation this week is to come closer to the reality of God's profound love for us. Yes, we are all sinners. But, we are loved sinners. We are being invited to be grateful, not to beat our breasts. We are invited, in this spirit to feel all that we can feel this week. Yes, we will feel some discomfort - after all, we feel discomfort when anyone puts themselves through some sacrifice for us. And, the sacrifice here is the gift of his very self - so that we might always know how completely Jesus entered into the reality of our human existence - "even death, death on a cross." [Phil. 2:6-9]

This week we follow our ongoing pattern of connecting with our Lord, as early as we can each morning. For even a few moments we name our desire: "Lord, let me be with you this week and open my heart to feel what you want me to feel about your love for me, personally."

Then, throughout the day, in many background, in between moments, we can continue our brief conversations with our Lord as we relate this desire with the people and events of our day. Finally, each night, we can pause, perhaps before a crucifix, or placing ourselves in our imagination before the cross, and speaking to our Lord, friend or friend, the gratitude we feel for the gift of mercy and eternal life his love has gained for us.

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