

Msgr. Bill's Weekly Letter...

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We enter into the holiest of weeks of the year today. These are the most solemn of celebrations in the Church. Today, of course, we join with the people of ancient Jerusalem, welcome the Messiah into our city (church, home, office, heart, mind, etc.), and sing the great Hosannas.

We read and participate in the reading of the Passion of the Lord today and on Good Friday. These long Gospels tell us of the love of God for his people and their redemption. What greater news could anyone desire?

God doesn't stand above or below man but at his very side. His walk with us demonstrates what infinity looks like on the cross.

We see how a "friend" can turn against us and turn us over to the test. Judas Iscariot, for whatever reason, sold out the Lord of life. The thirty pieces of silver was prefigured in the Old Testament when Joseph was sold to the merchants for the same price. Jealousy is an insidious infection of the human heart. It will drive us crazy with rage when it has the freedom to roam around in you or me. This kind of Satanic spirit can only be driven out by prayer and fasting.

On Thursday, we celebrate my most favorite Mass of the year. We remember the institution of the sacraments of Holy Orders and Eucharist. This was not just another Passover meal. The Apostles, of course, were very familiar with the flow of the meal. As Jews, they were well aware of the words to be used as they had been for hundreds of years. At this meal, however, Jesus adds unknown words, "*Take and eat; this is my body;*" and then, "*this is my blood of the covenant.*" These words are something never before heard at the Passover!

Jesus reveals the New Testament at this very point – his Body and Blood. The New Testament is the sacrifice of Jesus the Christ on the cross and celebrated at every Mass. Each Mass is the unbloody re-enactment of what happened on Good Friday.

Saint John Paul II, in *ECCLESIA DE EUCHARISTIA* teaches that every Mass takes us back to the entire Paschal event — we are in the room at the Last Supper – on the road to the Garden – on the Via Dolorosa - at the Crucifixion and Death – to the empty tomb on Easter Sunday. Jesus knew that this sacrament would allow you and me to relive these wonderful events of our salvation.

Friday we walk the path of Jesus on the Way of Sorrow and venerate the cross that purchased our gift of saving grace. In many ways it is the most romantic day in the history of the universe; the ever-faithful Bridegroom dies unjustly for the sake of his unfaithful Bride. It is the ultimate gift of love to overcome her faithlessness, a tragedy at first to be raised up to glory.

Finally, Easter Sunday, beginning with the most magnificent liturgy of the year, the Vigil Mass celebrating a new fire and light on our world, breaks the gloom of the death of the Lord. Out of darkness, a light shines forth to the entire universe. We return to singing Alleluia. We know the heaviness and destruction caused by sin is on the mend. The empty tomb affords hope to every sinner because sin does not define one; rather, God's love for you defines your existence. You are a daughter/son worth so much the Son died and rose for you.

Make every opportunity to celebrate this Holy Week with holy practices. Check the bulletin for the schedule. A time-honored tradition is setting aside three hours on Good Friday when there is no TV, video games, Facebook, Twitter, etc. Keep a prayerful silence and meditate on what God has done for you and me. God deserves our best.

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