



Easter is next Sunday. So the days of our spiritual voyage are all but over. The three holiest days of the liturgical year begin at dusk this Thursday and end at dusk on Sunday. They are the "Triduum," (TREE-DO-UM) "three days," in Latin. One should make every effort to be present in church and to participate during these most sacred of all times in the life of our Church.

A brief explanation of the Triduum Liturgies

Holy Thursday: *At the Last Supper, Our Lord gave us the Sacrament of the Eucharist (Holy Communion), the Sacrament of Holy Orders, (Priesthood), the Mass, and a wonderful example of service, the 'Mandatum' (washing the apostles' feet). On Thursday evening at 7:00 p.m., I'll preside at the Mass of the Lord's Supper at SFA, Fr. Boyle at SIJ. After the Gospel, we will wash the feet of 12 parishioners, representing the 12 apostles. After Communion, the Holy Eucharist is "Transferred" to a side altar for 'Repose.' For a while, remain after Mass and witness 'The Stripping of the Altar.' Then, there will be the "Nightwatch," private adoration throughout the night (until 11:30 p.m.; see pgs. 80/81 in the missalette).*

Good Friday: *This day, Our Lord suffered His passion and death on the Cross. At 2 p.m., I will preside at SFA, Fr. Boyle at SIJ. We begin **Part I** with the reading of the Passion in three parts. Then, after General Intercessions, we will exit the altar and re-enter the church from the rear. This is when a collection for the Holy Land will be taken. **Part II** follows with a processing down the main aisle with the crucifix held high, stopping 3 times to sing out, "This is the wood of the cross on which hung the Savior of the world." Next, all Venerate (kiss) the cross at the front of the church. **Part III** is a simple Communion Service. No Mass is celebrated anywhere in the world on this grim, but most indispensable day in mankind's history!*

Holy Saturday: *The Easter Vigil Mass is the most profound Mass of the year! It begins at 8:30 p.m., after sunset. No lights will be 'on' in the church. The liturgy begins in darkness, with the building of the First Fire (outside at the front entrance). Again, I preside at SFA, Fr. Boyle at SIJ. We will inscribe and light the 'Easter Candle' (used at all baptisms & funerals), which represents Christ, the Light of the world, dispelling sin and darkness. Proceeding down the main aisle of the darkened church with the candle held high, we will stop 3 times and sing out (in contrast to the 3-Good Friday-intonations), "Christ, Our Light." The people light their votive tapers from the Easter Candle (ushers assist). Once the Easter Candle is in its stand at the altar, the ancient "Exultet" ('Easter Proclamation', pg. 99 misslt.) is sung...3 pages long! This song recounts the history of salvation from Adam & Eve, the first ...Christmas, Calvary, and Easter ...to the present. After several readings, the "Gloria" is intoned (for the 1st time in 40 days), the Opening Prayer is recited, and the Mass begins! (--Pg.115 misslt.) A critical part of this Easter Vigil Mass is the renewal of our own baptismal promises (and, at SFA, our witnessing three members joining in the fullness of the Catholic Church ...with Confirmations and First Holy Communions).*

The liturgy will last, at least an hour and a half. It is remarkably beautiful, but not for the very young or faint-hearted. It is one of the most beautiful and complicated of all liturgies & well worth the experience if one is properly prepared. After all, what hope would there be for any meaning in life ...were there no Easter? It would all end at the tomb with a casket's meaningless thud at the bottom of the grave. But alas, Jesus has loved us to death. He is the glorious truth, the way, and the (eternal) life!

It has been my honor to have walked this Lent ...with you! --fr.t.