

Pastor's Column

April 6th, 2025

Passiontide

Jesus Christ: Yesterday, Today, and Forever ~

The last two weeks of Lent are historically known as Passiontide. During this time many churches cover their crosses, images of Jesus, angels, and saints with purple cloth. The season of Passiontide was more or less abrogated in 1969 when the Church promulgated a new set of readings for Mass.

It used to be that two Sundays before Easter (5th Sunday of Lent), the Gospel reading was about Jesus confronting the established powers with His divinity; this caused those in authority to pick up rocks to stone Him, “but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple” (Jn 8:46-59). Jesus would stay hidden from the religious authorities until his triumphant entry into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday), yet even then, He did not give anyone a chance to seize Him until he was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. The veiling of Jesus “hides” Him from us during the time when the plot to kill Him is afoot. Meanwhile, Jesus conceals Himself until His appointed time. The veiling of the images focuses our attention more so than usual on Our Lord and His Paschal Mystery (His passion, death, and resurrection).

Seeing the images in church covered up gives us a sense of disquiet and dread. Something is clearly different, yet it's more than that: something is wrong. The last two weeks of Lent place us in the midst of this drama and impart to us a sense of horror and shame at what is happening – shame in knowing that somehow our sins are to blame for the torture and murder of our creator, sustainer and redeemer.

We lose things during Lent. We are being pruned through the liturgy. Holy Church experiences liturgical death before the feast of the Resurrection (Easter). On the first day of Lent (Ash Wednesday) until the Easter Vigil, liturgical music is pared back and we lose the Alleluia, Gloria, and flowers. And, on this 5th Sunday of Lent, crosses, images of Jesus, angels, and saints are covered with purple cloth.

The pruning cuts more deeply as we march into the Triduum. After the Mass on Holy Thursday, the sanctuary is stripped, its bells are taken away, and the Blessed Sacrament is removed from the tabernacle. On Good Friday, there isn't even Mass (the one day of the year there isn't). At the beginning of the Easter Vigil, we are deprived of light itself! It is as if the Church herself were completely dead with the Lord in His tomb. This liturgical death of the Church reveals how Christ emptied Himself of His glory in order to save us from our sins and to teach us who we are.

In ancient times, the Vigil of Easter was celebrated in the depth of night. In the darkness, a single spark would be struck from flint and ignited into flame, the flame then spread throughout the whole Church. At the Vigil of Easter, the Church gloriously springs to life again.

Over the next two weeks, strive to connect yourself in mind and heart with the Church's liturgy in which these sacred mysteries are re-presented; then by your active receptivity, become a participant in the saving mysteries of Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

On the other side of this pastor's column is a liturgical schedule for Holy Week, for whatever community this bulletin is being distributed at. Please magnetize the Holy Week schedule to your refrigerator and participate in whatever opportunities you can.

In Our Lord's Paschal Mystery,



Fr. Thomas Nathe