

SOLEMNITY OF THE ASCENSION

MAY 17, 2026

Forty-five days ago we began the journey that is the Paschal Mystery! It all started with the Agony in the Garden which began the mystery which we know as the Passion of Our Lord. Jesus took upon Himself the weight of the sins of the world...our sins. These sins caused Him to suffer so greatly that His sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground.

His agony was followed by His arrest and mistreatment by the Temple guards who beat Him, spit upon Him, mocked Him and humiliated Him. He was then subjected to a sham of a trial where He was condemned to death and handed to the Romans to be scourged unmercifully. He was further mocked by being forced to wear a crown of thorns--instead of a crown of gold--fit for the King of the Universe!

He was then forced to carry His cross; the instrument of His execution, through the streets of Jerusalem. Because of having endured being whipped and beaten, Jesus staggered under the weight of the wood and fell three times, only to be forced to get back up and continue His

journey to Golgotha. It was there that He was stripped of His clothing, nailed to the cross He had carried and forced to die in the hot Jerusalem sun. Yet, not before He forgave those who had executed Him, as well as the repentant thief He was crucified with. He gave His Spirit over to God and passed from this world to the next!

The great mystery is “Why did Jesus endure all this suffering?” The answer can only be that He loves each of us so much that He sees His passion as a small price to pay for our redemption!!!

The second of the great Paschal Mysteries then is the death of Jesus. Let there be no mistake about it—JESUS DIED! The lance that pierced His side and His heart made His death absolutely certain. Pilate would not have released His body unless he had made sure that Jesus was dead. On Friday afternoon, Jesus was laid in a tomb where His body lay all through Saturday and into Sunday morning—a period of forty hours. When I was young, we would have what was called Forty Hours Devotion. The Blessed Sacrament would be exposed on the altar and People would spend time in adoration, starting Friday evening and going until Sunday morning. I haven’t heard

of Forty Hours Devotion being observed for many years. I hope that somewhere it still is. God, by definition is Eternal—He cannot die and yet, He DID!! He died for us that we may live with Him forever!

His death fills the world with an incredible darkness. For those Forty Hours, it seemed as though evil had triumphed. IT HAS NOT!!!!

Then comes the third of the great Paschal Mysteries: Easter Sunday—the Resurrection of Our Lord. A great light shines in that darkness. A light that has not, will not, cannot be overcome. The light of Christ, symbolized by the Easter candle shines in our hearts. It chases away despair and brings Hope.

The light destroys death, and it's hold on us and restores us to life. Hatred and anger are replaced by love and peace, if only we will embrace it. The great mystery of Easter causes me to ask "How can God love me: a sinner, so much?" I do not know the answer to this question. I only know that HE DOES!!!

Having gone through the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus, we are faced with the last of the Paschal Mysteries. The Ascension of Jesus to the Father, which we celebrate today. Jesus has ascended to the Father in heaven where He is seated at the right hand, to intercede for us. Having ascended to heaven, He has sent us the Holy Spirit, whose feast of Pentecost we celebrate next week. Jesus has not abandoned us, He has not left us orphans. He has promised to return to us at the end of the age. Until then, He is with us always, in His Church and in us, in His sacraments-especially the Eucharist, and in His love for us which endures forever. Alleluia!