

Holy Week Sermon

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“My God my God. Why have you forsaken me?” With these words Jesus, revealed that while he was the Son of God, True God in every way, he was also truly human in every way. He experienced to the fullest the whole range of human emotions. Feelings of happiness, joy, friendship, compassion and love. Feelings of anger, sorry, sadness, betrayal, and abandonment. When Jesus yielded up His spirit those who followed him, the apostles and disciples, also cried out in their hearts, "Master why have you forsaken us? Why have you left us alone? We miss your companionship; we long for your tender care and we pine for your wisdom to lead us in the ways of righteousness, of right living." These human feelings of tremendous loss of a loved one remained with them for a number of months. It was only with the infusion, the coming of the Holy Spirit, that they were able to understand the true meaning of the mystery of what happened that Holy Week and on the Friday that Christ died.

Holy Week confronts us with the redemptive ministry of Christ, rather than with His person. It offers us the grace and inner experience of salvation through Christ. Holy Week sets before us and invites us to participate in five great realities: an awareness of sin, the need for repentance, the substitution of the Lamb of God for our sins so that we may be redeemed, the sacrifice of the cross and God's acceptance of this sacrifice as it is revealed by the Resurrection. Holy Week takes us into the mystery of the Passover. It commemorates and makes present to us, the central mystery of the Upper Room – the Last Supper where Jesus give himself to us in the Eucharist.

Today I ask that we reflect on the mystery that unfolds during this Holy Week. The mystery has three aspects. Each corresponds to a day: Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. Each of these three aspects correspond to a place: Holy Thursday commemorates the mystery of the Upper Room, Good Friday the mystery of Calvary, Holy Saturday the mystery of the tomb of Christ. Collectively they reveal to us a special aspect of the mystery of Easter.

Christians now know, as the early Christians came to know, that the mystery of the death of Christ on Good Friday is connected to the mystery of Holy Thursday. In the upper room, Jesus, through a sacramental action, announces and represents, consecrates and offers, what is to take place during the following days. On Holy Thursday Jesus gave us the sustenance of life, the Eucharist. The Body and Blood of Christ. When we receive it, we come to be united with Him. He fills our heart, our soul and our mind with His loving presence, and with the life giving presence of the Holy Spirit. There is no room left in us for sorry, sadness or feelings of loneliness.

Whereas on Holy Thursday we followed Jesus to the Upper Room, on Good Friday we followed him to Golgotha where He was crucified for our salvation. In our encounter with the Cross of Jesus we are confronted with the mystery of the Redemption. The Cross is the instrument of Christ's sacrifice. The Cross is the instrument of our salvation.

On Good Friday let us reflect on the truth that Jesus Christ, by means of his voluntary death, wanted to make reparation for all our sins and to substitute a new life - his incorruptible life - for our corrupted life. His immortal life for our mortal life. Let us come to realize that it is only through contrition, through repentance, that we can assimilate the mystery of this Redemption. On Good Friday, at Calvary by his death on the Cross, Jesus accomplished our redemption.

On the Holy Saturday Jesus rests in the tomb. The faithful await. We await the feast of Easter Sunday when by His resurrection Jesus wins for us a victory over death. A victory that restores to us our proper heritage. A permanent home in the presence of our loving Father, our self-sacrificing brother, Jesus, who died for us and the Holy Spirit who engages us in loving dialogue. Let us on Easter Sunday sing praise of thanksgiving for the Mystery of Easter as expressed in these words:

He who is risen from the dead, by His death has overcome death. And has given life to those in the tomb. You, who did establish the measure of the earth, Jesus, King of the Universe, today are held by a narrow grave. Jesus, my Christ, King of all creation, what do You seek in entering the land of the dead. You are there to set free the race of mortal men and women. The Lord of all creation lies beneath our eyes. He is dead. He who empties the tombs is placed in a new grave. Let us hasten to anoint, as one would a corpse, Him who lives. As Christ was raised up from the dead, even so we also should walk in newness of life and we should serve in newness of spirit.

O Lord God almighty, may your blessing come and remain upon the Protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ukrainian Catholic Parish. On its clergy and on all who worship there. We pray

that in Your name and by the power of Your blessing that in this time of the Coronavirus 19 Pandemic we may be cured of our sickness, be relieved of our suffering and be consoled in all our anxieties and worries. We ask this in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen

Let us on Good Friday put Jesus's Cross at the center of our life. For the Cross of Jesus was not only an instrument of suffering, but an instrument of victory. His victory over death. **His Holy Resurrection.**