



Dear Parishioners,

Palm Sunday begins the most sacred week of our church year, Holy Week. Our Lenten season ends this Thursday evening with the beginning of the Mass of the Last Supper, which is the beginning of the Sacred Triduum (three days): Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday, the Easter Vigil. It is a week of contrasts. Many of the affirming crowds of people shouting the praises of Jesus on Palm Sunday would be the same ones calling out for his crucifixion on Friday.

The people of Jesus' day were not much different from many today. We've all heard the expression, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." Many of the same people who were cheering Jesus on Palm Sunday, during His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, would be crying out with the crowd on Friday for His execution. As a practical meditation for us today, how often have we gone along with the crowd at the office or by the proverbial water fountain and gone along with gossip or what is not even true, rather than stand up for what we know is the truth.

Referring to the week as *Holy*, we might look into just what that word means in our life. While for some it might be synonymous with prayer and going to church. The definition of Fr. William McNamara, noted Carmelite priest, author and spiritual director, defines the word holy as "a *whole person open to the needs of ALL.*" How easy it is to associate holiness exclusively with church or devotional activities when it is much more. A holy person is one who does not just attend liturgies, but carries out that liturgy, that message of Jesus, into every day living, by being aware of other people. Christianity that stops at the church door is not much use to anyone. Our faith ought to be visible in the way we treat each other throughout the week.

Often at the end of Mass I share the words: "The Mass is ended only here-we now must leave this building and live it out there in the world."

This week as we concentrate on Jesus, who lived His life for others, let us look into ourselves and ask the same question. How open am I to others? How caring am I to those around me - perhaps even in my own family? Living out ones religion in day to day practice is what is important. It's relatively easy to just *attend* Mass on Sunday. The true test of our holiness is how we live it out on Monday through Saturday!

My brother, Jack, gave me a plaque many years ago that still hangs on my office wall. It, too, might be a practical message or meditation for the week ahead.

"I expect to pass through this world but one time.
Any good thing that I can do or any kindness that I can show
To any fellow human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer
Nor neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.

Stephen Grellet

Have a meaningful Holy Week.



When Does Lent End?

Everyone knows that Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, but when exactly does it end? In the early Church, the number 40 was very significant as it was the number of days that Jesus fasted in the desert before beginning his ministry (Matt. 4:2). This also was the length of time that Elijah fasted on his journey to Mt. Horeb (1 Kings 19:8). Therefore the Church over time, designated that the Lenten Season should last for a period of forty days. In fact, the Church's official title for Lent, *Quadragesima*, is Latin for "forty". By the seventh century, the six-week period of Lent, began on Ash Wednesday and continued through Good Friday and into Holy Saturday, ending at noon on that day. Thus it was forty days long, excluding the Sundays which occurred in that time frame, as Sundays were NOT considered days of fasting. As a result of the Second Vatican Council, (1962-65), a change took place concerning Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday, the final three days of Holy Week. By the fact that these three days remembered the sacred events that led up to the Resurrection, no longer would they be included in the Lenten Season. Therefore, Lent officially ends Holy Thursday evening with the beginning of The Mass of the Last Supper.



<u>Monday, April 18</u>		
John Halter Junior	7:30am	Fr. Martin
<u>Tuesday, April 19</u>		
Father of Charlotte	7:30am	Fr. Martin
<u>Wednesday, April 20</u>		
Special Intention for Linda Lauderio	7:30am	Fr. Martin
<u>Holy Thursday, April 21</u>		
Mass of the Last Supper	7:30pm	Fr. Martin, Fr. Korpi, Fr. Wilson, Deacon Avery
Bilingual Mass		
<u>Good Friday, April 22</u>		
Good Friday Service	7:30pm	Fr. Korpi
<u>Saturday, April 23</u>		
Blessing of Food	10:00am	Fr. Martin
Easter Vigil Mass	8:30pm	Fr. Martin, Fr. Korpi, Fr. Wilson, Deacon Avery
<u>Sunday, April 24</u>		
Parishioners	7:30am	Fr. Martin
Mrs. Mary Hoffenberger	9:00 am	Fr. Korpi
Ericka Cadran	11:00am	Fr. Korpi
Mafak Sarafa	12:45pm	Fr. Wilson
Spanish Mass	2:00pm	Fr. Wilson

Good Friday Rosary Imagine what might happen if every Catholic in the world would pray a Rosary on the same Day! We have an example in October of 1573, when Europe was saved from the invasion of the mighty Turkish Fleet, by the praying of the Rosary by all Christians! So, on **Good Friday**, let us all pray a Rosary for peace in the world and the return of moral values into our communities. If possible, please **pray your Rosary between Noon and 3:00 pm**



Holy Thursday – The Triduum begins:

Mass of the Last Supper --7:30 p.m.

Good Friday:

Stations of the Cross -- 3:00 p.m.

Good Friday Service -- 7:30 p.m.

Holy Saturday:

Blessing of Food --10:00 a.m.

Easter Vigil Mass -- 8:30 p.m.

Easter Sunday:

Regular Sunday Schedule

7:30 a.m. 9:00 a.m. 11:00 a.m. 12:45 p.m.

Spanish Mass-2:00 p.m.

Parish Prayer List

Please remember, in your prayers, the sick of our Parish Community:

Joanna Arnista, Sarah Buckley, Barbara Burnett, Fidel de la Cuesta, Mary DelArco, Infant Theo Moreno Hines, Stephanie Hoang, Mary McDonald, Barbara Olweiler, Jack Sanders, Pam Wadsworth

For the deceased:

Joseph Barclay, Cousin of Joan Consoli, Carol Knock and Margaret O'Connor

Pray for our military men and women and their families. May God keep them safe and out of harms way.

ADVERTISER OF THE WEEK
ROSA FAMILY CHIROPRACTIC
 Fairfax 703-876-5600 Alexandria 703-750-1177

Jerusalem **OBITUARIES** 33 AD**Calvary**

Jesus Christ, 33, of Nazareth, died Friday on Mount Calvary, also known as Golgotha, the place of the skull. Betrayed by the apostle Judas, Jesus was crucified by the Romans, by order of the Ruler Pontius Pilate. The causes of death were crucifixion, extreme exhaustion, severe torture, and loss of blood.

Jesus Christ, a descendant of Abraham, was a member of the house of David. He was the Son of the late Joseph, a carpenter of Nazareth, and Mary, His devoted Mother. Jesus was born in a stable in the city of Bethlehem, Judea. He is survived by His mother Mary, His faithful Apostles, numerous disciples, and many other followers.

Jesus was self educated and spent most of his adult life working as a Teacher. Jesus also occasionally worked as a Medical Doctor and it is reported that he healed many patients. Up until the time of His death, Jesus was teaching and sharing the Good News, healing the sick, touching the lonely, feeding the hungry, and helping the poor.

Jesus was most noted for telling parables about His Father's Kingdom and performing miracles, such as feeding over 5,000 people with only five loaves of bread and two fish, and healing a man who was born blind. On the day before His death, He held a Last Supper celebrating the Passover Feast, at which He foretold His death.

The body was quickly buried in a stone grave, which was donated by Joseph of Arimathea, a loyal friend of the family. By order of Pontius Pilate, a boulder was rolled in front of the tomb. Roman soldiers were put on guard.

In lieu of flowers, the family has requested that everyone try to live as Jesus did. Donations may be sent to anyone in need.

**Religious Education News**

Easter Holiday — all Religious Education classes are cancelled during Holy Week and Easter Week, April 17 through April 26. Classes resume on Sunday, May 1; Monday, May 2; and Tuesday, May 3.

Practice for First Communicants in the church, 6:00pm-7:30pm — Group I on Wednesday, April 27; Group II on Thursday, April 28.

Mass for First Communicants on Saturday, April 30: Group I at 9:00am; Group II at 11:30am.

Religious Education Program Graduation for Seniors on May 1, 6:00pm in the church.

Mother's Day, May 8 — Sunday classes only cancelled; classes will be held on Monday, May 9 and Tuesday, May 10.

Final Religious Education classes — Sunday, May 15; Monday, May 16; and Tuesday, May 17. Report cards will be distributed.

Student Registration for 2011-2012 is now open. Forms are available in the Religious Education Office, on the community board in the church vestibule, and at website: www.edu.nativityburke.org; on the Nativity CCD tab click on Student Registration.

May 9, 2011 - Nativity Catholic School's First Annual Golf Tournament & Friend-Raiser!

Help support our parish school while enjoying a morning of 18 holes of golf and lunch!! Shotgun start at 9:00am on **May 9, 2011**, at **Laurel Hill Golf Club in Lorton, VA**, ranked 15th in *Golfweek's* 2009 list of the nation's 50 best municipal courses. Not a golfer?? Volunteers, advertisers, and donations for the raffle are needed. Registration forms and information are located at <https://nativitymn.ejoinme.org/golf>. **Registration is open until May 2, 2011.** If you can help or participate in any way, please contact Jean Lewis at (703) 426-8735 or email at NativityGolf@gmail.com

**PRAY THE ROSARY FOR WORLD**

The Little Angel Gift Shop has an assortment of unique **First Communion veils** handmade by Natasha Hines. There is also an assortment of gifts for the First Communicant. Stop by and see what is available.



Thank you from WON



We wanted to thank all the parishioners that gave so generously to our Easter Basket Drive. We were able to spread the joy of Easter to children throughout the area. Your donations were sent to ECHO, the Salvation Army, Martha's Table, children in our parish, and to the Hispanic Outreach Program. Your generosity is always the greatest gift.

Have a Happy and Joyous Easter,
The Members of WON

"Blessed are they who come in the Name of the Lord!" Are you being called to proclaim Jesus as a priest, deacon, religious brother or sister? If you think this may be so, call Father Brian Bashista at (703) 841-2514, or write: b.bashista@arlingtondiocese.org.

PRO-LIFE CORNER



"Abortion is an issue of profound moral significance. Our posture toward it determines to a large extent whether we are a people 'dedicated to the proposition' that all are created equal." Robert P. George. Please support the sanctity of human life that exists from conception to natural death.

Through Palm Sunday, April 17, 2011 - 40 Days for Life Prayer Vigil at American Women Services, 8316 Arlington Blvd, Fairfax, VA 22031. Daily 7 AM - 7 PM. Can you pray for 1-2 hours and witness for Life? Details at <http://www.40daysforlife.com/fairfax/> The Nativity Parish contact is Josh Reynolds, 703-470-8978, josh.reynolds.01@gmail.com

The **GABRIEL PROJECT** supports women who are facing a crisis pregnancy and need help. Contact 1-866-444-3553 or gabrielproject@arlingtondiocese.org You are not alone! (Gabriel Project is a crisis pregnancy program open to all and sponsored by the Catholic Diocese of Arlington.)

24-Hour Crisis Pregnancy Hotline: 1-800-395-HELP (4357)
Project Rachel (healing after abortion): 1-888-456-HOPE (4673)

Pregnancy Resource Centers Phone Numbers:

- Catholic Charities National: 1-800-CARE-002
- Catholic Charities Local: 703-425-0100
- A Woman's Choice: 703-538-4305
- Gabriel Project: 1-866-444-3553

**THE WEEK AHEAD
IN OUR PARISH**

Sunday, April 17 PALM SUNDAY

3:00 pm.....Hispanic Mass (CH)

Monday, April 18

9:30 am.....Prayer Shawl Ministry (PH)
6:30 to 7:30 pm.....Lenten Soup Supper (PH)
8:00 pm.....AA Meeting (APR)

Tuesday, April 19

7:30 pm.....Knights of Columbus (PH)

Holy Thursday, April 21

7:30 pm.....Bilingual Mass of the Last Supper (CH)

Good Friday, April 22

3:00 pm..... Stations of the Cross (CH)
7:30 pm.....Good Friday Service (CH)
9:00 pm.....Hispanic Stations of the Cross (CH)

Holy Saturday, April 23

10:00 am.....Blessing of Food (CH)
8:30 pm.....Easter Vigil (CH)



"I came for the cookies, but I found love and Jesus."



Be a part of the flame that draws souls to Christ. Bake cookies for the **MEN'S KAIROS prison retreat** scheduled at **Fluvanna Men's Prison** beginning **April 27, 2011**.

For recipes and information about KAIROS, visit the KAIROS Buckingham web site -

<http://kairos-bkcc.org/sites/default/files/documents/KairosCookiesBrochure35.pdf> or call Diane Bayne 703-763-7230.

Please place your cookies in the kitchen opposite the church office or give them to a staff member. **Final pickup for the Fluvanna weekend is Tuesday, April 26th.**

Thought for the Week:

At the foot of the cross is where the repentant sinner finds comfort, where the troubled soul finds courage.

St. Gaspar del Bufalo



Annual Multi-Car Raffle Thank you to those who have already returned their sold tickets. There is still plenty of time to enter the raffle, but don't wait to the last minute. Remember each \$5.00 ticket is a chance to win all five 2011 vehicles from Koons of Manassas (Honda Civic Hybrid, Honda Accord, GMC Sierra Truck, Honda CRV sport utility and Honda Odyssey Van) plus up to \$20,000 in cash. Thank you for your continued, generous support. If you have any questions or need more tickets to sell, please contact Sam Morthland at 703-455-2816.

Knights of Columbus Frenchy Cyr Memorial Scholarships

Last year, Nativity's Knights of Columbus Council 7992 awarded six Cyr Memorial scholarships for Catholic secondary school tuition (grades 9-12), totaling \$6000. Scholarships were awarded to Kathleen Caler (Ireton HS), Richard Golinowski and Abigail Prince (Paul VI HS), and Emily Sun, Megan Golinowski and Rachel Hoppe (Nativity School). This year at least five scholarships, each for \$1000, will be awarded. One scholarship will be awarded to the eight-grade student scoring the highest; all entrants, including eight-grade students, will compete for the remaining scholarships. Entrants must be registered parishioners at Nativity, or a son or daughter of an active member of Council 7992. Submissions must be post marked no later than midnight, Friday, April 29, 2011. Application forms are available in the Church office, at Nativity School, from guidance counselors at Bishop Ireton, John Paul the Great, and Paul VI high schools, or from Tony Rozga. Questions, call Tony Rozga, 440-8390.

Soups on...Last Soup Supper

This Monday, will be our **last soup supper** this Lent! The cost is \$5 per person and \$20 per family. Please help support the teens of Nativity and spread the word!!!



Diocesan Pilgrimage

All are invited to this year's Diocesan Pilgrimage at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. To encourage families to pray together both at home and in front of the Blessed Sacrament, two additional events featuring the Living Rosary and Eucharistic Adoration will be held in advance of the pilgrimage:

May 1, 2011, 6 p.m., Pope John Paul the Great High School, Dumfries (Day of the Beatification of Pope John Paul II)

September 11, 2011, 3 p.m., St. Michael Church, Annandale

Diocesan Pilgrimage, October 8, 2011, 9 a.m., Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, D.C.

WATCH SPECIAL HOLY WEEK AND EASTER PROGRAMMING ON EWTN: Join EWTN in

remembering Christ's love for us through His passion, death and resurrection.

During Holy Week and Easter, EWTN brings you special programming and live Easter Masses from Rome and the Basilica of the National Shrine in Washington, D.C.

Watch EWTN on Channel 161 or your local carrier. For more information please visit www.ewtn.com

High School and Jr. ViBe:

What is **ViBe**?? If you are new to the Parish or just never really knew what **ViBe** was, I'm here to help! At first glance all the activities that Nativity has to offer can be overwhelming. If you happen to look over the different groups and see **ViBe**, you might be thinking what a strange name for a group!! If you are, don't write it off so quickly. If you are in 7th-12th grade this is the group for you! **ViBe** is Nativity's youth group. The name **ViBe** was chosen with the hope that everyone who enters our doors will feel comfortable enough to be real. We live in a world that tells us we have to be a certain way, and feel certain things. Here at **ViBe** we encourage all teens to first be real with God, real with themselves, and as a result of those two things, be real with each other.

Nativity Youth Ministry offers opportunities for spiritual growth, service projects, retreats, summer workcamp, and fellowship with other teens through meals, games, etc. The main **ViBe** program is on Sunday nights for both Jr. High and High School students. At Youth Group, every Sunday is different but always includes food, friends, fun activities, teachings, discussions, music, etc. Youth Group is available for all 7th- 12th graders and all are welcome to bring their friends!!

Youth interested in **ViBe** should contact Meghan O'Connor by phone or e-mail to be notified of activities and times. [703-455-2400](tel:703-455-2400) or cyo@nativityschool.org

The next **ViBe**/Jr. **ViBe** meeting will be on April 17th from 6:30-8:30pm in the APR. There will be **NO ViBe** on April 24th. I pray that you all have a joyful Easter as we celebrate Christ's resurrection!

The next Workcamp meeting is on May 19th from 7:00 - 8:00pm in the Parish Hall. If you are interested in finding out more information about our summer Workcamp trip please feel free to contact Meghan O'Connor at 703-455-2400 or cyo@nativityschool.org



OPERATION STARFISH® NEWS

www.operation-starfish.org

“It’s All About Changing Hearts...”

“Why don’t we ever talk about how much money is being raised for Operation Starfish? Why don’t we have a big thermometer at the back of the church showing the progress of our fundraising?” These are questions occasionally asked by Nativity parishioners. Fr. Martin’s answer: “Operation Starfish is not about money – it’s about changing hearts.”

While Fr. Martin reports back to the parish on the total amount raised each year, and the figures are available in fact sheets and on the web, he does not want the focus of our ministry to the poor to be about the money. Instead, he urges us to learn about the conditions of poverty, to feel a sense of compassion for those who are hurting, and to act on that compassion, each in our own way. God has a plan for each of us, and it’s not always writing a check.

This year, three teens at Lake Braddock Secondary School did all three: they used their 8th grade Civics curriculum to research poverty in Haiti and present the results of their project to the community at an April 14th “Making a Difference” event. They developed a strong feeling of compassion about the people they studied, and they embarked on a variety of fundraising efforts to take action on the needs they identified. As a result, a family in Haiti will receive a new house, and 20 children will be able to go to school for a year. Food For The Poor has released a press announcement about the young Lake Braddock students and who knows how many hearts will be moved by their story?

Many parishioners and friends have heard stories about naked children from our people who return from mission trips to Haiti. One group has decided to make “pillowcase dresses” to send to our Nativity Villages. They have made over 300 dresses so far. Others have led efforts to fill sea containers, have obtained large quantities of donated shoes and underwear, or have held special events. Some of us build solidarity through prayer. Others travel to Haiti bringing only their presence. There is room under the Operation Starfish umbrella for everyone, in their own way, to make a difference.

Our focus is on awareness, compassion and action, and we don’t worry about the money. That may be why the funding is always there to do the work that is needed. We have a very generous parish – our richness lies in our reaching out, across the street and around the world, to help those who need us. As Fr. Martin says, “if our hearts are in the right place, the money will follow.” And it does. Since 1998, over \$3 million has gone into the Starfish basket, and has come out in the form of more than 800 houses in 6 Nativity Villages in Haiti.

A Penny A Gallon For Starfish

In April, Cardinal Plaza Shell will automatically donate 1 penny to Operation Starfish® for **EVERY** gallon of gas pumped. Pumping gas can build a house for a family in Haiti. CP Shell will also donate 5% of any auto repairs to Operation Starfish® throughout 2011. Just tell the service desk you’re with Nativity Church. Cardinal Plaza Shell is located at the corner of Old Keene Mill Rd. and Rolling Rd. in Springfield. Call 703-451-6232.

For more information on Nativity’s Operation Starfish®, contact Jim McDaniel at seastar2004@msn.com, or call the Church office, 703-455-2400.

¡QUÉ HORAS NOS AGUAR DAN! Domingo de Ramos

Javier Leoz



En el pórtico de la Semana Santa, con el Domingo de Ramos, se entrecruzan dos sentimientos: el gozo (al ver cómo Jesús es aclamado) y la tristeza (mañana todo será llanto).

Y, por esa puerta, adentrándonos en Jerusalén acompañamos a Jesús que nos invita a vivir con El auténticas horas de pasión, entrega, amor, donación, sacrificio, muerte...y resurrección. ¿Seremos capaces de meternos de lleno en la solemnidad de la Pascua? ¿Somos conscientes de que, nuestro ser cristiano, arranca y nace de la Pascua del Señor?

1. Jesús va a la cabeza. No se esconde. Hoy, su rostro es halagado por miles de palmas pero, en viernes santo, será abofeteado por la burla, la incomprensión o el escarnio. En ninguna de las dos situaciones, Jesús, se echó atrás. Sabía que, su misión, iba a ser probada por diversos contrastes: gloria y desdicha, triunfo y fracaso, júbilo y desnudez.

Con Cristo, en este domingo de ramos, iniciamos una impresionante peregrinación hacia el culmen de su misión. Vamos con El y, además, lo hacemos siguiendo sus indicaciones. El Señor quiere celebrar la Pascua ¿por qué no vivirla, especialmente este año, como si fuera la primera vez? ¿Por qué no vivir intensamente cada gesto y cada oración, cada palabra y cada silencio que nos conducen hacia el rostro auténtico de Dios?

2. En el inicio del Domingo de Ramos se encuentran los vítores y las aclamaciones, pero allá al fondo – sobre un montículo- Jesús divisa el horizonte donde, el próximo Viernes Santo, se alzarán una cruz exponente del mucho amor que Dios nos tiene. Una cruz que, lejos de estar vacía, estará colmada por un cuerpo que, en esas horas, será olvidado, insultado, silenciado y traicionado.

Hoy, la alegría, hace que se sacudan palmas al viento. En la tarde de Viernes Santo, las voces enmudecerán por cobardía. La cruz se alzarán en la más absoluta soledad (con la sola presencia de Juan y de María) y, como alabarderos, a un lado y otro, dos ladrones que –ante iguales ofertas- responderán de formas diferentes.

3. Hoy con esta manifestación pública de nuestro afecto a Jesucristo expresamos esa gran procesión que, como cristianos, estamos realizando a la Jerusalén celeste. ¿Servirán de algo nuestros ramos bendecidos? ¿Sonarán a sinceros nuestros cánticos jubilosos? ¡Por supuesto que sí! Frente al intento, por diversos estamentos, de coartar nuestra libertad religiosa; de planificarnos una sociedad sin más perspectiva que sus propias murallas...los cristianos sabemos que, un ciudad, nos aguarda al final de nuestra existencia: el cielo.

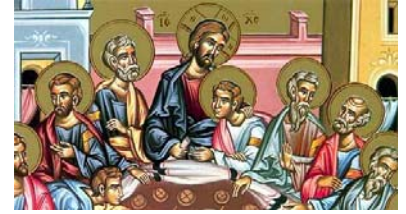
Jesús, si se aventuró a dar estos pasos finales que le llevaron a la muerte, es porque así lo creía: era paso previo y obligado para cumplir su misión; para introducirse en la Patria celeste y, para que junto con El, también nosotros podamos participar de esa conquista. ¿Y aún hay quien se resiste a aclamar a Jesús como Señor y como Rey?

Que nuestras gargantas, en este soportal de la Semana Santa, entonen cánticos de alegría y de alabanza: ¡Bendito el que viene en el nombre del Señor! Porque necesitamos un poco de cielo, un poco de Dios, un poco de eternidad. Porque, entre otras cosas, necesitamos seguir a Jesús por ese camino que nos lleva derechos a la comunión con Dios Padre.

¡Feliz Semana Santa, hermanos! ¡Felices horas de pasión, muerte y resurrección! ¡Las necesitamos más que nunca!

JUEVES SANTO: PRODIGIO DE AMOR

Javier Leoz



Antes de la Pascua, cuando Jesús sabía que había llegado el momento de ir hacia el encuentro con el Padre, miraba nuevamente a los suyos; a los que tanto había amado. A aquellos por los que en tantas ocasiones y en tanto se había desvivido y....de nuevo los ama hasta el extremo.

1.El Jueves Santo contiene el prodigio del amor del servicio. ¿Cómo puede el Señor arrodillarse y, en ese gesto, indicarnos que ser otros cristos hay que saber doblegar nuestros intereses y nuestros títulos, nuestras capacidades y nuestra dignidad a los pies de la humanidad.

El amor, en la tarde de Jueves Santo, resulta sorprendente y escandaloso, interpelante y abrasivo a los ojos: es la generosidad que no mira a quien la ofrece sino a las manos que están dispuestas a realizar lo mismo que el Maestro enseña.

El Señor se va pero, antes de marcharse, nos deja un lugar inequívoco en el cual nos deberán de reconocer y hallar creyentes y no creyentes, practicantes y no practicantes: el amor.

2. El Jueves Santo posee el prodigio del amor eucarístico. Que el Señor se quede en la tierra, en medio de nosotros, de igual forma a la que está en el cielo, sólo es descifrable desde la fe. Pero es que, Jueves Santo, nos regala eso: "*Haced esto en conmemoración mía*". Además de pan de eternidad, el Señor, nos invita a hacer un acto de fe: si lo ha dicho el Señor, entonces, el Señor aquí está. Edificando a su Iglesia. Fortaleciendo, con su Cuerpo y con su Sangre, nuestra fe y nuestros trabajos apostólicos. Por su Eucaristía, el Señor, comienza a alimentar a esa Iglesia que rodea el altar (12 apóstoles con virtudes y fallos) y lo sigue haciendo, fiel a su promesa, allá donde nos encontramos los cristianos de los cuatro puntos del mundo.

El Señor se va pero, antes de marcharse, nos concede este sacramento admirable ante el cual se han emocionado los santos o dado su misma vida tantos mártires en la clandestinidad o en tiempos de dificultades. Eucaristía misterio de fe y de amor. De Pasión y de Muerte. De Sacrificio y de Resurrección.

La intimidad de Cristo, lo más sagrado y noble, lo mostramos con respeto, admiración, emoción y a la adoración los sacerdotes. ¡Tú estás aquí, Señor! ¡Te has querido quedar con nosotros! ¡Testamento que, un día y otro también, seguimos cumpliendo tus hermanos sacerdotes!

3.EL Jueves Santo nos muestra el alma sacerdotal del Señor. No sólo nos ofrece un poco de pan y un poco de vino. Es Cristo mismo quien se nos da: sacerdote, víctima y altar. Los primeros cristianos decían "*No podemos vivir sin la misa de los domingos*".

Nuestra Iglesia, nuestras familias cristianas...tampoco podrían ser las mismas sin la figura de Cristo Sumo y Eterno Sacerdote y, tampoco, sin los sacerdotes.

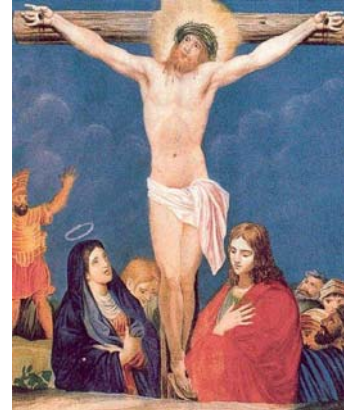
Hoy, en este atardecer en el que Jesús tanto confía a sus apóstoles (sus vivencias, sufrimiento, servicio, generosidad, alimento, eucaristía....) pedimos perdón, una vez más, por las veces en que como sacerdotes no logramos estar a la altura. Por aquellos hermanos nuestros que se han alejado del sacerdocio como don de vida, respeto, prudencia, pobreza, pureza u obediencia. Conscientes de que nuestra misión la llevamos en vasijas de barro (como nos recuerda San Pablo) pedimos al Señor que reavivemos nuestra vocación sacerdotal y podamos servirle con transparencia, radicalidad y valentía. Orad por nosotros.

El Señor se va pero, antes de marcharse, junto con el banquete pascual nos concede el don del sacerdocio. El nos acompaña en nuestras fatigas y menosprecios. El, más allá de nuestras capacidades y limitaciones, es quien está a la cabeza de lo que somos y de la causa a la cual servimos.

Jueves Santo es todo un gran prodigio de amor y de ternura, de misterio y de obediencia, de adoración y de fraternidad.....de humildad inclinada a los pies de la humanidad doliente.

CONTEMPLAMOS EL DRAMA DE CRISTO

Viernes Santo



Habla el silencio y cesan las melodías. Y no porque estemos de luto sino porque necesitamos un espacio para la reflexión y la contemplación del drama de Cristo: ha muerto por nosotros en una cruz.

Como Judas, miramos desde lejos al Señor. ¡Te he vendido, mi Señor ¡ Sin darme cuenta o siendo consciente de ello te empujé a subir a la cruz con mi cobardía o mi afán de oportunidades.

Sí, mi Señor. Somos como ese apóstol que, teniendo a Dios delante de sus ojos, pudo más su apego al ruido del dinero, su servicio al poder que su fidelidad al que tanto había compartido contigo. Déjanos, Señor, ver tu cruz por lo menos desde lejos. También nosotros, en estas horas de generosidad y de entrega, sentimos que te olvidamos frecuentemente. Que el precio por el que te cambiamos es a veces mucho menor que aquel por el cual te traicionó el apóstol ingrato.

Como Pedro, necesitamos querer tu cruz. Porque, como Pedro, también constantemente te negamos. Porque no queremos ver la cruz en el horizonte de nuestra vida. Porque, incluso como Pedro en el Tabor, quisiéramos una vida sin lucha, sin sufrimiento. Un Dios que se desentendiera de los padecimientos de la humanidad.

Hoy, Señor, al contemplar tu cruz en este Viernes Santo...vemos que no hay tres negaciones escritas en sus dos maderos. Que, en ellos, se encuentran cinceladas y a millones las contradicciones de nuestra vida cristiana, nuestra tibieza a la hora de dar nuestra cara por ti, nuestro arrojo con las cosas del mundo y nuestra timidez para con las cosas de tu Reino. ¿Nos dejas contemplar como Pedro, desde lejos Señor, tu Santa Cruz?

Como Juan, permítenos estar debajo de tu cruz. Porque, también como Juan, necesitamos recostar nuestra cabeza ya no en tu pecho sino sentir la sangre que baja con fuerza por su madero. Como Juan, oh Jesús, también pretendemos el cielo (un puesto a tu derecha o a tu izquierda) sin mayor esfuerzo que una petición como contraprestación a nuestra amistad contigo.

Sí, Señor. Déjanos como Juan, tu preferido, recibir al pie de la cruz –además del regalo que nos aguarda en la mañana de Pascua- a esa Madre que nos invita a estar firmes y en guardia hasta el día en que tú, de nuevo regreses para llevarnos contigo, para darnos nueva vida, para resucitarnos a una vida gloriosa y resucitada.

Como a María, admítenos por lo menos unos minutos para ser testigos de tanta pasión y de tanto desgarramiento. Porque, como María, también quisiéramos ser centinelas de tu amor que, en la cruz, lejos de morir se convertirá en semilla de eternidad para todos nosotros. Déjanos, oh Cristo, al pie de la cruz formar parte de la incipiente Iglesia, ser hijos de María y recibirla como Madre que permanece fiel, silenciosa fuerte y solidaria para acompañarnos en las noches oscuras del alma.