

From the PA's Desk

### **Gospel Today: Jesus' Passion**

This year we hear Matthew's version of the Passion Narrative. The long reading can be divided up into 13 parts beginning with the Last Supper. What I have always found especially helpful in understanding who Jesus was is to understand what he endured during his last few hours in the Passion.

What many Christians fail to realize is that Jesus underwent two trials during a brief 24 hour period. The first trial was with the Sanhedrin (the teachers of the Law of Moses) whom Jesus repeatedly criticized and challenged during his public ministry. They obviously wanted to get rid of Jesus, but they had no power to do so themselves because the Romans limited their power to kill anyone. We are told they met in the middle of the night which was against their own Jewish regulations. They were only supposed to meet in the light of God's day. They already knew that they needed Jesus to die, but couldn't tell the Romans they wanted him eliminated because he made them (the religious leaders) look bad, so they met at night to fabricate a plan.

During Passover time in Jerusalem, everyone was on edge, both Jews and Romans alike. Remember Passover is about celebrating the reality that God led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt to be free people. But were the Jews still free? No, because they were under the rule of the Romans. They were an enslaved people once again. So on Passover, which recalled their freedom and liberation, everyone was on edge because uprisings and riots broke out quite regularly. So during Passover, the Romans brought added soldiers into the city to safeguard the peace keeping.

What the Sanhedrin conspired to tell the Romans the next day in front of Pilate (at Jesus' second trial) was that Jesus was an enemy of Rome, and if they didn't get rid of him, Jesus would cause some serious uprisings and trouble. Either their argument to Pilate was convincing, or he could have cared less about the life of one more Jew. Unlike popular mythology, Pilate was not wimpy in any sense of the word. He was a ruthless killer who cared little for the life of any Jew, let alone this one named Jesus.

In the night before he died, Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, and the text says he fell down "prostrate in prayer," and was "sorrowful even to death." The original Greek text literally says he was on the verge of a mental and physical breakdown. Jesus, in his human consciousness, was scared to death, and thus he prayed "Father, let this cup pass from me!" What I've always admired about Jesus is that despite his own fears and anguish, he stayed right where he was, even while he saw them coming to get him.

I spent Holy Thursday night in the Garden of Gethsemane in 1983, and what many people fail to appreciate is that between the city walls of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives is a huge grave yard that existed in the time of Jesus, and it is still there today. As I sat there in the darkness in 1983 and watched both the graveyard and Jerusalem bathed in moonlight, what I could not help realizing was that as his betrayers approached Jesus as he was walking through the grave yard, Jesus had plenty of time to run away and escape into the darkness. But this man stayed right where he was and trusted in the God he knew. The thought of that conviction and courage still makes me emotional to this day.

### **Holy Week Triduum Liturgies:**

I pray that you attempt to make it to as many of the Triduum Liturgies as possible. The Holy Week Triduum (meaning "three") Liturgies are basically one liturgical act with intermissions or breaks between them. It really made a difference in my life once I began to understand and participate in all that these liturgies say about Catholicism and Christianity in relationship to the Paschal Mystery; the Passion, Dying, Rising and Ascension of Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

Mass of the Lord's Supper is at 7PM on Holy Thursday. This is where the washing of the feet (Jesus' premier example of discipleship) takes place as well as the invitation to stay for some time that evening to worship and adore Jesus in the "Reservation Chapel" set up in the parish library until 10PM that night.

Good Friday of the Passion of the Lord service (the only day Mass **is not** celebrated in the Catholic Church) begins at 12:30PM, **but at 12 Noon we are invited to listen to a dramatic reading of the Stations of the**

**Cross by the youth of the parish.** One can expect to be moved as you participate in the Passion, the Adoration of the Cross, Holy Communion and silent dismissal so that you may prepare for the great celebration of the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday at 9PM. **There will be no 4:30 Mass or Confessions on Saturday.**

**The culmination of the Triduum, the Three Days, takes place at the Easter Vigil at 9PM. At that liturgy, we will baptize Aaron, Sydney, and Natalie, and they will be confirmed and welcomed to the Eucharistic Table with Alan and Terry. The Mass begins at the Easter Fire outside the church.**

**There is a Mass on Easter Sunday at 9:30AM. I encourage you to attend all of the Triduum or as much as you can to heighten your Easter Joy this year, and may joy-filled hope... unexpected blossoming's... and profound possibilities be your blessings this year, beginning this Easter!**

### **Alpha This Week: Why and how should I pray?**

#### **Talk summary:**

- People pray in all cultures – and everybody prays in crisis – why do we do that?
- Christians pray to grow their relationship with God – an intimate loving Father
- Christian prayer is to the Father, through the Son and by the Spirit
- There are rewards to prayer (presence, peace and power)
- God answers prayers differently (yes, no, wait)
- If it's a no/wait – we may realize later why God didn't answer at the time – but sometimes there's no reason: I just have to trust that God is good and he loves me
- Jesus taught us how to pray (The Lord's Prayer). There is no set formula, but a simple model to remember is: 'Thank you... Sorry... Please...'
- Keep it simple, keep it real, keep it going

### **Deacon Ordination Tickets:**

I talked to Fr. Bill Rutkowski a few days ago, and he told me I could invite 50 people to my deacon ordination ceremony on Sunday, June 11. Since I don't have any family living in this area, I am opening it up to any parishioners who want to be there. I really wasn't planning to invite anyone, since for me priesthood ordination will be my ultimate goal, if it is God's will, so I'm not making too big of a deal regarding this next step. It is a major step in my unfolding journey, but hopefully it is just one step along the way. There are a few folks from my former parish in Hemlock and Merrill who want to be there though, so if you'd like a ticket, please let me know before Easter.

### **Maple Syrup Festival Table:**

Since we are looking for various ways to evangelize and spread the Christian message of who we are in this area, during the Maple Syrup Festival, on Saturday from 9am until 7 pm, we will have an evangelization table located in the Atrium of the High School, and our goal is to have literature available about our parish (who and what we are) as people file by for lunch or dinner. I need volunteers to sign up for perhaps one or two hour shifts... to greet people and pass out parish information flyers. If you can help, please let me know.

### **Download the New Parish App:**

The St. Vincent de Paul Parish app is now available to download for iPhone and Android smart phones. Stay connected throughout the week with instant notifications, an easy-to-access event calendar, and the ability to quickly reply to or share messages. We still have some work to do on it, but you can download our app today at [myparishapp.com](http://myparishapp.com).

**Thanks to Morgan Monte**, a Pastoral Ministry student for the diocese of Saginaw who has been working on getting *myparishapp* going, and for her work in redeveloping our Facebook page. Both are still a work in progress, like all of us.

### **First Communion Crosses.**

**Thanks to Bill Morey** who made some beautiful handmade wooden Crosses for our first communion and confirmation children. They truly are works of art and reflect his creativity in sharing his faith with those around us. Please see the photo next to Mary Moomey's article in this week's bulletin.