

Pastor's Column

The Easter Triduum—March 28, 29, and 30/31— Will These Be Our “High Holy Days” or Will It Be “Business as Usual”?

The season of Lent has always been an important time in the life of the Catholic Church. It begins very dramatically with the reception of ashes, in a sense, marking us as God's people.

Near the end of the season, today on Palm Sunday, we receive palms which remind us of the people's love for Jesus—a love which turned to hate and indifference quite rapidly.

The special practices of Lent...added prayer, fasting, abstinence, almsgiving...remind us that this is no ordinary time.

Because Lent is a season with a personality of its own, we tend to think of it as a season which has its existence just for the sake of itself. However, it is important to remind ourselves that Lent exists only as a preparation for something bigger. That something bigger is the **Easter Triduum**.

The term **Easter Triduum** might not sound familiar to you; however, you are very familiar with it. The Triduum (TRIH-doo-um) is the three-day celebration of the death and resurrection of Christ—Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Vigil/Easter Sunday.

The Church meets at times during those three days to remember what it is that Jesus has done for us.

Lent often overshadows the Triduum, but the documents from Vatican Council II tell us:

Christ redeemed us all and gave perfect glory to God principally through his paschal mystery: dying he destroyed our death and rising he restored our life.

Therefore the Easter Triduum of the passion and resurrection of Christ is the culmination of the entire liturgical year.

Lent exists so that we can prepare ourselves for these three great days. What is remembered during these three days is so spectacular and miraculous that it takes the Church fifty days to celebrate it. From the close of Easter Sunday until Pentecost we celebrate with great joy that which Jesus has done for us.

Just imagine that someone you loved was torn from you unexpectedly, dying a painful, hideous death, and suddenly that person is brought back to life. Imagine your joy. How would you express that joy? Could you be happy for one day and be done with it? Probably not! It would take many days, perhaps a lifetime to express your joy. Because that person's life has been restored, your life has been restored.

That is exactly what happens. Jesus dies a hideous death. God's only Son sent to save us has been put to death. And then suddenly he is alive again. We need fifty days to celebrate this great miracle—or perhaps we need our lifetime to express it. Thus we take forty days (Lent) to prepare, three days (Easter Triduum) to experience, and fifty days (Easter time) to celebrate the great mystery of our faith.

What the Triduum commemorates, that which makes it the “culmination of the entire liturgical year,” is the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus was willing to die for our sins and was resurrected, death no longer is the end of life for us. It is the beginning of new life. We gather at the Easter Triduum to remember the saving act of Jesus and the miracle of his resurrection. Because Jesus died and was resurrected, we live.

The term Triduum means “three days.” The three days are counted as the Hebrews counted their days, from dusk to dusk. Therefore, the three days of the **Easter Triduum** are from dusk on Holy Thursday to dusk on Good Friday (day one), dusk on Good Friday to dusk on Holy Saturday (day two), and dusk on Holy Saturday to dusk on Easter Sunday (day three).

Each of those days “tells” a different part of the story of Jesus' saving action. On Holy Thursday we remember the Last Supper, Jesus gives us the Eucharist and tells us to “Do this in memory of me.” He then washes the feet of the apostles. On Good Friday we remember the passion and death of Jesus. We celebrate the resurrection of Christ either at the Easter Vigil on Saturday night when new members are baptized and welcomed into our Catholic community or on Easter Sunday morning.

We look at the **Easter Triduum** as one single celebration that lasts for three days. We cannot separate the death of Jesus from his resurrection. We do not spend all of the three days in church, but at various times during those days, we are called to church to gather and remember together. When we are not in church, we are asked to keep the spirit of those days even in our homes, if possible. Those days are not days of “business as usual.”

The **Easter Triduum** is quickly approaching! I invite, encourage, and challenge you to look at your calendars, set your agendas, and re-arrange your priorities and activities, so that you can celebrate as many of these three days as you can here in the Faith Community of St. Thomas More.

Let these days be “High Holy Days” for you and your family. Do not let these days be just “business as usual”!



Fa. Mike