

Easter 2018

Dear Parishioners,

I take this opportunity to invite you and your family to join us in faith and worship during the Sacred Liturgies of Holy week. Here at Saint Gregory the Great the nature of our ritual celebration of the Paschal Mystery bears unique characteristics of parish tradition.

The Holy Thursday Liturgy and the Institution of the Eucharist

One of our beloved traditions is the washing of feet, which involves all parishioners, young and old, in full active participation. "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19), Jesus is saying to us that when you do this, remember me. This is Jesus being there for us, so we can be there for Him. In the gospels Jesus tells Peter to Shepherd his flock by being of service to others. At the end of the Last Supper, He models that service and washes his disciple's feet as if to say, 'what I have done, so you must also do'. As He is the Bread of Life who nourishes us with His Real Presence, we must be washers of feet. In essence, He is saying He will always be there for us, so that we can be there for each other. This is all about Eucharistic service and a love so profound you can almost taste it.

Good Friday of the Lord's Passion

After the Last Supper, Jesus goes with the disciples to the garden of Gethsemane, an oil press in the garden of olives, to pray...and the passion begins. Peter, James, and John fall asleep; they cannot wait even one hour with Him. Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss and the soldiers arrest Him. During the Good Friday liturgy, the Gospel of John recounts the passion, followed by the oldest prayers of intercessions in which we pray for the Jewish people and their growth in faith. We must all take responsibility for Jesus' death. In another unique tradition here at Saint Gregory the Great, we venerate the cross by passing it over the heads of the congregation. A very moving experience indeed! Jesus carried the cross bar (the horizontal portion of the cross) to Golgotha. Golgotha was an old stone quarry used to build the temple walls. The rock left behind was full of cracks and looked like a skull. The vertical piece of the cross was placed between these cracks. "The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone of our faith," (1 Peter 2:7). There Jesus was crucified between two criminals; a bad man and a bad thief who had been caught. (We recall his birth in Bethlehem when he was between the shepherds; always with the poor and the lowly.) Ultimately, Jesus was laid in the tomb by Joseph of Arimathea. Good Friday is called *good* because on Easter morning Jesus rose from the dead.

Holy Saturday Night: The Easter Vigil

On Holy Saturday we enter a tomb-like church of great absence, similar to how it feels to see the empty chair of a departed loved one. We feel it. As the evening progresses, we experience fire and light along with the splashing waters of chaos, which through the Holy Spirit become the splashing waters of baptism. Alleluia, Christ is Risen! Just as our own fire is lit by Joe Duffy, we recall St. Patrick who lit the Paschal Fire on the hill of Slane in Ireland. The Druid Priest said, "Unless we quench that fire tonight, it will never be extinguished."...Nor was it. The fire of our faith burns brightly.

In our RCIA Candidates and Elect, we rejoice in the Baptismal celebration of new life, reception into full communion with the church, and in Confirmation. We also renew our own Baptismal promises, at all the Easter Masses, to be witnesses of the resurrection.

Let me express deep gratitude to God for creating signs of new life among us, and gratitude to you for your sacrificial response to our offertory increase campaign and the Annual Catholic Appeal. I also have deep gratitude for the new life of our new preschool and thank God for the return of Deacon Ron and Rebecca Krawczak. Please continue your prayers for Stephanie Lower in recuperation.

In closing, I invite you to experience God's loving mercy & unconditional love in the Lenten Penance Service on Monday, March 19th at 7:00pm in preparation for Easter. We will have 18 priests to hear your confessions.

May the Grace of the Risen Lord bring new life to each and every family this Easter!



Rev. Nicholas Clavin, Pastor