

HOLY WEEK AT HOME

Some thoughts from Fr. Kevin

For us as Christians, we are entering this week into the highest, most solemn week and celebration of the year. Yes, it even beats out Christmas, though Christmas is a close second!

It breaks my heart that during this highest and holiest week of the year we are unable to physically gather together in prayer, to share these mysteries together.

HOWEVER, do not let that keep you from making this a holy week! Of course, as you know, you can access livestreamed Masses online. First of all, a few pointers for making livestream of Mass a bit more of a prayerful experience in your homes:

1. Try to make the space you're gathering in a "sacred space." Light some candles, set out some religious images around your screen.
2. Consider putting on your "Sunday best", dressing up as you would for a Sunday; put on nice clothes etc.
3. Before the livestream starts, spend some time in prayerful preparation. Maybe a few minutes in silence, sing or listen to a hymn to help you transition from the busyness of your day and the time in your home to entering into a prayerful time.
4. Do the normal postures of Mass (stand when supposed to stand, sit when supposed to sit, kneel when supposed to kneel).

But besides that, in addition to livestreaming Mass, as well as in addition to some resources you may be getting from our parish staff already, I wanted to offer here some of my own practical suggestions you might use of how to enter more fully into these mysteries of Holy Week in your home

Palm Sunday: Decorate your home with some branches (maybe from your yard, maybe pine branches). Wear red and decorate with red as that is liturgical color for that day. Read the story of Christ's entry into Jerusalem (Mt 21:1-11) while holding some branches.

Holy Thursday: Consider having a simple supper as a family together; consisting of just fresh-baked bread, perhaps some grapes, and wine (or grape juice for the kids), and during the meal read the story of the Last Supper (Jn. 13:1-15), and discussing it as a family.

- What are the ways we've seen God serve us and feed us in the last week (or month)?
- Who is someone in my family I want to thank for a service they've done?
- How can I better serve my family and friends?

And maybe even then wash each other's feet as a family. Play some prayerful music as you do so, and then close with a family prayer together.

Then to prepare for Good Friday, as we strip the churches as at the end of Holy Thursday, together as family "strip down" your homes. Take down all your pictures, your decorations, your decorative knickknacks. Cover the TV, then together make a prayer corner or prayer space to "keep watch" with Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Read the story of Christ in the Garden (Luke 22:39-54) and spend some time in silent prayer together before you go to bed.

Good Friday: At some point gather with your family, and pray the Stations of the Cross and/or read the Passion Narrative for Good Friday (Jn 18:1—19:42), and gather together in prayer with a cross. Ask your family members what they want to leave at the foot of the Cross, or discuss what it means to be at the Cross with Jesus. And then take some time to venerate a cross that you have in your home – pray silently together and put on some prayerful music.

Holy Saturday Night: If you are not livestreaming Easter Vigil Mass, here's a way you can celebrate Easter Vigil on Saturday night in your home, which may be especially more engaging to families that have young children.

Gather after Sundown and have an "Easter Fire." Shut off all the lights in your house and gather around the fire with candles. Make the sign of the cross and have someone say the following words:

Dear brethren (brothers and sisters), on this most sacred night, in which our Lord Jesus Christ passed over from death to life, the Church calls upon her sons and daughters, scattered throughout the world, to come together to watch and pray. If we keep the memorial of the Lord's paschal solemnity in this way, listening to his word and celebrating his mysteries, then we shall have the sure hope of sharing his triumph over death and living with him in God.

Then light your candles from the fire. Process into your house (still keeping the lights off).

Listen to the *Exultet*: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVwuc_CNswY

Then process to different parts of the house, and in each part of the house read from Scripture.

- Process to a different room and read the FIRST reading: the CREATION story (Genesis 1:1 – 2:2)
- Process to another room and read the SECOND reading of ABRAHAM and ISAAC (Genesis 22:1-18)
- Process to a different room and read the THIRD reading of MOSES and the RED SEA (Exodus 14:15 – 15:1)

Then gather back in your living room, or family prayer space. Listen to or sing the *Gloria (Glory to God in the Highest)*. As you do, turn on all the lights of the house; and if you have bells to ring, ring the bells! Yes, ring them during the WHOLE Gloria!

- Read Romans 6:3-11
- Sing *Alleluia*
- Read Matthew 28:1-10
- Discuss what all this means: the different readings, the symbol of the candles, the Light of Christ, etc.
- Then together renew your baptismal promises:

Dear brethren (brothers and sisters), through the Paschal Mystery we have been buried with Christ in Baptism, so that we may walk with him in newness of life. And so, now that our Lenten observance is concluded, let us renew the promises of Holy Baptism, by which we once renounced Satan and his works and promised to serve God in the holy Catholic Church. And so I ask you:

Do you renounce Satan? All: I do.

And all his works? All: I do.

And all his empty show? All: I do.

Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth? All: I do.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered death and was buried, rose again from the dead and is seated at the right hand of the Father? All: I do.

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting? All: I do.... AMEN

Then say the closing prayer together:

Let us pray. We ask you, Almighty God, to pour out on us the Spirit of your love and bless us through today's Easter Solemnity and, in Your compassion, defend you from every assault of sin. And may You, O Lord, who restores us to eternal life in the Resurrection endow us with the prize of immortality. And now that the days of the Lord's Passion have drawn to a close, may we who celebrate the gladness of the Paschal Feast come with Your help and exulting in spirit, to those feasts that are celebrated in eternal joy. R. Amen.

Close with the sign of the cross.

Then sing or listen to an Easter hymn, such as *Joyful Joyful* or *Jesus Christ is Ris'n Today* or *The Hallelujah Chorus* by Handel.

Then CELEBRATE! Eat goodies, have a big tasty meal, re-decorate the house, etc.