

+ J. M. J.

It is generally believed that the first part of the Gospel written was the Passion of Christ, and the rest of the Gospel came later. This gives us insight into how central these events that we remember this week are to our faith. We call this week Holy Week. What the Church asks of us is to enter into the Paschal mystery, Christ's passion, crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. We enter into that mystery by meditating on these saving events, allowing the Holy Spirit to take us there, showing us how the events of holy week are intimately bound up in our daily lives. I paraphrase St. Gregory Nazianzen:¹

- If we are crucified beside Christ as one of the thieves we acknowledge our God, worshiping him, acknowledging our sinfulness, and entering paradise with Jesus.
- If we are Joseph of Arimathea we ask for Christ's body.
- If we are Nicodemus we bring spices to prepare Christ's body.
- If we are one of the Marys, Salome, or Joanna, we weep but are the first to experience the stone rolled back, the angels, even possibly Jesus.

It is also in the Passion that we see the full effect of our sin and how in the moment that Christ is about to vanquish it, it manifests its violence in many serious forms:²

- unbelief
- murderous hatred
- shunning and mockery by the people and their leaders
- Pilate's cowardice and cruelty
- Peter's denial
- In Judas's betrayal of Jesus with a kiss we recall expressions of love that within marriage are so beautiful and outside of marriage so hurtful and destructive.

¹ St. Gregory Nazianzen, fifth week of lent, Saturday, OR.

² CCC 1851.

- The disciples' flight reminds us that missing Mass except for a serious reason is a grave sin.³

It is in contemplating the wounds, the scourging, the crown of thorns, etc. that we realize that Christ has turned the marks of his Passion into merciful forgiveness. The Church then reminds us of our obligation to confess faithfully our grave sins at least once a year,⁴ so firstly this week we should avail ourselves of the opportunities for the sacrament of penance at Our Lady of Sorrows, tomorrow at 4:30 and Tuesday at 7:00. The sacrament too is useful for sins that are venial because it is through the sacrament we appreciate even minor sins offend God and harm the Church and we receive the remedial power that removes the root of sin.⁵

Secondly we need to ask God how it is that we can keep this week holy. The preferential way is to participate in the liturgies of the Easter Triduum, the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Thursday evening, the celebration of the Lord's passion on Friday, and the Easter Vigil on Saturday night. This should be our priority, but if we cannot we should spend time meditating on the mysteries of our Lord, praying the stations of the cross, contemplating the seven sorrows of Mary, meditating on the Passion of Christ, and reading Gospel according to John, especially chapters 13-17.

Let us prayerfully celebrate our faith this week in celebrating what is the holiest week of the year.

May God bless you.

³ CCC 2181.

⁴ CIC, can. 989.

⁵ John Paul II, *RP* 32 §7.