

From the Desk of Fr. Matthew Arbuckle

Palm Sunday is the start of Holy Week, and we have only one week remaining of Lent before we celebrate the Resurrection. But it will be a very busy week.

Before I get into the schedule for Holy Week, let me share a story. By now all of you know that I have a bit of fun with the idea of not wishing a Merry Christmas before it's actually Christmas, and the same goes for Easter ("Suffer well!"). A few years ago at a penance service in the southern part of our diocese I was subjected to "Happy Easter" from more than half the penitents – and this was EARLY in Lent. So there I sat and wept. Silently. On the inside.

Easter is almost here, but let's prepare for it well by fully participating in the prayerful opportunities in Holy Week. The first event is the Chrism Mass at the Cathedral in Lafayette on Tuesday evening. This is where all the priests of the diocese gather along with the bishop and representatives of all the parishes as the bishop blesses the three sacramental oils which are then given to each parish for use in the coming year. If you have never been to a Chrism Mass, I think that it is one of the Masses that should be on your bucket list (along with ordination and Easter Vigil).

Thursday evening we will celebrate the Mass of the Lord's Supper as we commemorate the Last Supper and the institution of the Eucharist. This Mass also begins the Sacred Paschal Triduum, and so at the end of Mass there is not a final blessing but instead the tabernacle is emptied then left open and we place the reserve Eucharist in another temporary place. There are no other Masses permitted on Holy Thursday other than in the evening, so please note that there are no morning Masses that day.

Good Friday, a day of fasting and abstinence, we start the Novena of the Divine Mercy Chaplet, and we will have a couple opportunities for Stations of the Cross (weather permitting we will be outside at noon), then the Celebration of the Lord's Passion starts at 3:00 pm. This is the one calendar day out of the year where Mass is not celebrated. Please treat this day as a day of strict penance and prayer.

Holy Saturday please be aware that there is not a 4:30 Mass but instead we joyfully celebrate the Easter Vigil, which starts outside on the John Paul II Terrace about 8:30 pm. This is where those awaiting reception into Mother Church are baptized and confirmed. If you have never been, you owe it to the beauty of your Catholic faith to attend at least once. It is THE most sacred Mass of the year, as the womb of Mother Church is opened to give birth to new Christians as they receive the light of Jesus Christ.

Lastly, to accommodate what we expect to be heavy crowds and traffic for Easter Sunday, we have slightly adjusted the schedule so that the times are: 7:30, **9:30**, and 11:30. Please consult the bulletin so that you are reminded of the liturgical schedule for Holy Week.

Saint Joan of Arc...pray for us!