

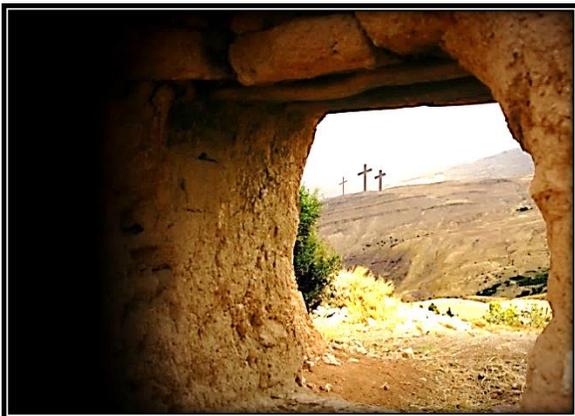


ON THE PATH TO EASTER, LET US ...

The path to Easter has brought us to Holy Week; that time in the Liturgical Year (Advent, Christmas, Ordinary Time, Lent, Easter, Ordinary Time) when the Church in all of Her members recalls the depths to which God descended, so that man could be raised. Our preference might be to recall the *joyful* moments of God's descent when the Word became flesh in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary at the *Annunciation* (cf. Saint Luke 1:38), reached Saint Elizabeth and made the infant in her womb leap for joy at the *Visitation* (cf. *ibid.* 1:44), and dwelt amongst us in Bethlehem at the *Nativity* (cf. Saint Luke 1:38), but at this point on the path to Easter, we are called to *deny ourselves, pick up our crosses, and follow Jesus* (cf. Saint Matthew XVI:24) through His Passion and Death; if we want to arrive at the Resurrection!

When the Holy Season of Lent began on Ash Wednesday, we stood at the feet of Jesus and heard Him tell us to pray, fast, and give alms. Soon thereafter, on the *I Sunday of Lent*, we walked with Him into the desert and quickly learned that the devil would tempt us to not pray more fervently than we did last year, to not fast more sacrificially than we did last year, and to not give alms more generously than we did last year. Perhaps we gave into those temptations, failing to "listen to Jesus" as the Father told us to do when we walked with Jesus up the mountain on the *II Sunday of Lent*. And so, when we sat at the feet of Jesus and heard the Parable of the Fig Tree on the *III Sunday of Lent*, we sadly realized that we were in the same place we were last Lent. We admitted to ourselves that we were that "barren Fig Tree", and we begged God to give us more time to bear fruit. Now, we stand at the feet of Jesus on *Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion* asking: "Did I come to my senses? Did I take advantage of the additional time given to me by God to bear fruit with prayer, fasting, and almsgiving? Did I "repent and believe in the Gospel" as I was told to do on Ash Wednesday, or am I still spending my inheritance on a life of dissipation like "the Prodigal Son" I encountered on the *IV Sunday of Lent*?

On this *Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion*, we freely stand at the feet of Jesus. None of us have been *caught in the very act of committing adultery* and none of us have been *made to stand* before Jesus (as was the case with the woman in the Gospel for the *V Sunday of Lent*.) If we stand before the Lord today at Holy Mass, we stand here freely and He asks (as He asked the woman): "Has no one condemned you?" And we respond: "No one" – to which He replies: "Then neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on, do not sin any more" (cf. Saint John VIII:3-11).



Let us not squander this gift of Divine Mercy! Let us (sinners/fruitless fig trees though we may be) on this final stretch of the path to Easter, recommit ourselves to walking *with Jesus* on *His* path to Easter. Let us first, as repentant prodigal sons, return *home* to the Father's merciful embrace in the Sacrament of Confession/Penance/Reconciliation (CPR) on Monday, 15 April. Let us then return *home* on Tuesday, 16 April and contemplate, not the mysterious woman caught in the act of committing adultery, but rather let us with Bishop Andrzej, contemplate the woman caught up in the mystery of faith: *Mary of Holy Saturday*. Let us return *home* on 17 April (Spy Wednesday), and with *Mary of Holy Saturday*, let us stand at the Lord's feet nailed to the

Cross and contemplate *the Seven Last Words*. Let us return *home* for the *Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper* on Holy Thursday (18 April) and with Bishop Henning, let us remember how Jesus washed the feet of those whom He sent in His footsteps to wash the feet of others! Let us return *home* on Good Friday (19 April) and with our Parish Priests walk with Jesus-condemned to carry the cross in our place to Calvary. Let us recall how God's descent brought Jesus into Hell on Holy Saturday, and let us return *home* to the Easter Vigil (20 April) with Bishop Murphy to see the Light that led (and leads) those dwelling in darkness and the shadow of death, on the path to Easter into Eternal Life!