

Holy Week Ceremonies Recall Christ's Death

(Continued from page 1)
Now in our turn, we do this in memory of Jesus and His victory over death. Each parish church in our Jerusalem where we acclaim and honor Christ our Redeemer King.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday

These three days are quiet "getting ready" days. On Monday, the Church tells us the Gospel story of how Mary Magdalene anointed the feet of Jesus, her homage to the Master whom she loved so much. Tuesday and Wednesday, we hear the account of Christ's Passion as written by St. Mark and St. Luke.

Holy Thursday

The Mass of Holy Thursday introduces us into the Heart of Christ and the very center of our Christian religion. The Mass commemorates and renews the Last Supper, the dinner which our Lord shared with His disciples in the evening of that night when He would be betrayed into the hands of His enemies. The Last Supper was the first act in the divine drama of the Passion. It announced in advance "My Body broken" and "My Blood poured out" for our redemption. And when our loving Saviour told us "Do this in memory of Me," He perpetuated for all time the saving power of His Sacrifice on the Cross.

Holy Thursday is the "Birth-day of the Eucharist and Lent's end; purple gives way to feast-day white. The quiet organ waltzes out its joy, the church bells about their joy for all to hear. Every devout Catholic will certainly receive Holy Communion on this day when Christ first said, "Take and eat."

Two large Hosts are consecrated at Mass on Holy Thursday. One for the priest's Communion, the other is placed in a chalice and kept for Good Friday. This Second Host is carried after Mass in procession to a side altar called "The Repository," to be the focus of our devotion all day throughout the day. Various "rites" with one another to preserve a shrine of incomparable beauty as token of the people's gratitude for this great sacrament. During the procession, the choir sings "Pange lingua," a hymn which tells the story of the Last Supper. At the Repository, the priest incenses the Holy Eucharist with clouds of fragrant, symbol of our love. It is a pious custom to visit the various churches in our neighborhood to honor Christ as He waits for coming.

At the Cathedral on this day there is a very important rite. There, the Bishop, our spiritual father, and our link with the

Apostles, blesses the Holy Oils used throughout the year. These oils are used at Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders and Extreme Unction.

When you bring your new-born infant to your parish church for Baptism, the priest anoints the child with these Oils blessed by the Bishop. When you call the priest to anoint your sick friend or relative, the priest brings the Holy Oils, blessed this day at the Cathedral. This ceremony of Blessing the Holy Oils is, therefore, a visible expression, a sign or symbol of the spiritual unity of the diocese.

Priests from every parish must go to the Cathedral on Holy Thursday to obtain the newly blessed Oils. If any is still left from last year's supply, it is carefully poured out into cotton and burned reverently.

Good Friday

There is surely no other moment in the year when the Church succeeds in producing the right impression so perfectly as she does in the service of Good Friday. The very strangeness of the rites, utterly unlike any others, gives us at once the feeling that this is a day different from any other. It is the only day in the year when there can be no Mass, and only the priest, and no one else, goes to Communion. The Good Friday ceremony has three parts: first, the lessons and prayers; then, the veneration of the Cross; and finally, the "Mass of the Presanctified."

The Scripture readings tell us about the Old Testament Passover and the Passion account according to St. John. Then follow eight prayers. The priest invites us and gives us the intention "for the holy Church of God," "for our Pope," "for all the holy people of God," "for the pagans" — we pray for everyone on this day when Christ died to redeem us all.

Next comes the dramatic unveiling of the Cross. For two weeks it has been hidden from our gaze, but now the priest, standing at the foot of the altar, uncovers, first one part, then another, each time going closer to the center of the altar, and each time chanting, "Ecce lignum Crucis . . . Behold this wooden Cross on which hung the Saviour of the world; and the choir answers as we kneel, "Venite



The Paschal Candle, symbol of the Risen Christ, the Light of the World, is blessed at the Holy Saturday service and used on that day for the blessing of the Baptismal water. The candle is lighted on the Gospel side of the sanctuary during the Paschal season. Inserted in it are five grains of incense, marking the five wounds of Our Lord.

adoremus . . . come let us adore." The cross is then placed on a cushion at the altar step. Priests and servers "creep to the cross" and kiss it reverently, and then the layfolk at the Communion rail venerate the crucified Savior.

After all have honored Christ's Cross, the priest goes to the Repository, obtains the Host consecrated on Holy Thursday (presanctified) and brings it to the altar. He lifts it, as long ago Christ was lifted on the Cross, for all to see, and then receives it in Communion. The ceremony ends abruptly; the church is void of the Eucharist, the tabernacle left empty. On Good Friday, the most ignorant passer-by who enters a Catholic church can see that the Church mourns because her Lord is dead.

Holy Saturday

The first thing to understand about the service of Holy Saturday morning is that it was all composed to be held (and for a thousand years was held) during the night between Saturday and Easter Sunday. So we have to imagine ourselves in the deep of a dark night, just before sunrise on Easter Day. In 1951, our Holy Father Pope Pius XII permitted parishes to conduct this rite at its proper time, but, so far, not many of our American churches have used the privilege.

Although this ceremony is probably the most significant and beautiful of all the Church's rites, it is the least understood and least attended. In reality, it is the climax of Lent.

If we have gone to Lenten devotions, fasted, meditated, and tried our best to make a good Lent, but then miss Holy Saturday, it's like getting ready for a trip, buying your ticket, packing your luggage, kissing your friends good-bye, and then not going anywhere!

Lent was the time of getting the Catechumens ready for Baptism, and getting Christians ready to renew their Baptism by Confession. The Holy Saturday liturgy is replete with these two themes: rebirth (by Baptism) and renewal (by Confession).

The ceremony starts at the church door where the new fire is struck from flint, the symbol of Christ the Light of the World arising from His cold, stony tomb. The Light of Christ is brought in triumph through the dark church up to the sanctuary where the great Easter Candle, symbol of the Risen Christ, is lighted.

The exquisite "Exultet," its poetry and music unequalled by any other hymn in the Church, announces the story of God's long preparation of the chosen people to receive the Savior.

Then follow "Twelve Prophecies," readings from the Old Testament that seem so weird, some unless we realize that they speak to us of how God has created us for a new life, raised us up "like dry bones" back to grace and supernatural life, saved us, as He saved Noe, and delivered us, like the three young men in the burning furnace, from the fires of temptation and hell.

The Baptismal font is blessed, set aside for its holy purpose of giving grace to scores of infants in the coming months — and an invitation to renew the innocence of our own Baptismal Day.

And because Baptism makes us again now a "citizen of heaven," we call on all our fellow citizens, the Saints, in a Litany, asking them to "pray for us." And then the Mass.

For forty days, the Church has been preparing for what will follow now. The priest intones the Gloria in excelsis Deo. This is the dramatic moment of the whole year. At this moment, Lent ends, and it is Easter. The bells ring out, the organ trumpets its gladness; from now on there is nothing but Joy. Christ has risen — and with Him, we rise too, we rise to a better life, a holier life, the life we have struggled through Lent to achieve. After Communion, the choir sings short Vespers and we leave church with the Alleluia echoing in our ears and hearts.

In Memory Of Me

Our Lord told us not to forget Him. We keep His memory in every Mass, yet never so vividly as in the ceremonies of Holy Week. These ceremonies, however, are but the outer expression of the real religion of spirit and truth.

The true Catholic will not merely attend these rites as a spectator or curious onlooker, but his mind and heart and soul will penetrate into that deep mystery whereby "God so loved the world that He gave His Only-Begotten Son" to be crucified, and so die for our salvation. Indeed the Church has kept His sacred command to "Do this in memory of Me."

Shrines Violated In Yugoslavia

Roma, Germany — (NC) — A new series of desecrations of Catholic churches and shrines in Yugoslavia is reported by KNA, German Catholic News agency here.

The agency listed two churches which had suffered malicious damage, and stated that a number of wayside crosses had been destroyed and chapels robbed. Protest by Catholics has led to the arrest of three priests and exorbitant "taxes" on one of the damaged churches, the agency said.

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Europe Cloistered Nuns Plight Cited

Akron, O. — (NC) — Americans three away more food than cloistered Carmelite nuns in Spain, Italy and Portugal have to live on, according to Father Maria L. Dittami, O. Carm., prior of the Infant of Prague Villa here.

Father Dittami has been appointed by Father Kilian Lynch, O. Carm., superior general of the Carmelites, as the head of a campaign in this country to aid the nuns.

During official visits to Carmelite cloistered convents in Spain, Italy and Portugal, Father Lynch found nuns suffering from malnutrition, without adequate medical care and living in convents without heating or lighting facilities, Father Dittami said.

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