

Care for Creation— Week One: Raising Awareness of the Importance of Water in Liturgy and Life

Water is mentioned a total of 722 times in the Bible, more often than faith, hope, prayer, and worship. In the Bible, it doesn't take long for water to be mentioned. Right away in Genesis 1:2, "The earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters." Water is such an essential component of life, it was created on the very first day.

Water in Catholic Ritual...

Baptism

Water is the principal symbol for baptism. John baptized Jesus with water in the Jordan River. Jesus and his disciples went into the region of Judea, where they baptized others. (Jn 3:22-23). The word baptism in its origins is Greek and means "immersion" and "bath". Immersion in water is a sign of death, and emersion out of the water means new life. To bathe in water is also to undergo cleansing. St. Paul sums up this truth when he says, "You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God who raised him from the dead". (Col. 2:12)



Holy Water

Holy Water is blessed at the Easter Vigil on Saturday night before Easter Sunday. It is believed that the use of holy water dates to the first century, and even some sources relate its early usage to St. Matthew, although written documentation about its usage dates to the third or fourth century. In the Catholic Tradition, holy water is used for the purpose of baptisms, blessing of persons, places and objects, or as protection against evil and danger. Upon entry into the church, Catholics often dip their fingers in a font containing holy water and make a sign of the cross on themselves. The act, reminding worshippers of their baptism, is a gesture giving physical and material expression to a desire for repentance and purification, and is a physical experience helping make the transition from normal business into the activity of divine worship. Holy Water is also sometimes sprinkled upon the congregation during the Mass; this is called aspersion.

Water Mixed with Wine

During the offertory, after the gifts are brought to the altar, the deacon, or priest, pours a little water into the chalice of wine. The water in the chalice represents the water that flowed from Christ's side during the crucifixion; the wine represents his blood. The use of a mixture of water and wine symbolizes the two natures of Christ -- human and divine.

Lavabo (Priest's washing of his hands)

After the offertory prayers over the bread and the wine mixed with water, "the Priest washes his hands at the side of the altar, a rite in which the desire for interior purification finds expression." The priest recites the words, "Wash me, O Lord, from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin." Thus, rather than serving a practical need for physical washing, this gesture is a sign of the priest's desire for purity of heart as he offers the Sacrifice of the Mass.

Holy Thursday Mandatum (the rite of washing feet)

According to the Gospel, Jesus performed a final act of service for his Disciples following the Passover meal. Arising from the table, He tied a towel about His waist and filled a basin with water. Then, one after another He washed the feet of each disciple. After washing the Disciples' feet, Jesus explained what He did and why. "You should wash one another's feet," He told them. "I have set an example that you should do as I have done for you. (John 13:1-17) In the Catholic Church, a washing of the feet ritual occurs Holy Thursday and is called the Mandatum. This ritual action is an important call for all people that they, too, should be willing to serve others.

Interested in learning more? Justfaith Ministries is hosting an informational webinar on a new program: Sacred Waters: Oceans & Ecosystems on this Tuesday, April 12th at 12:30pm (Pacific time). Register using this link: <https://justfaith.org/april-program-information-meeting/> or scan the QR code to the right.



Palm Sunday is an interesting celebration as we begin Holy Week. It's a celebration of Jesus as King, but even as we celebrate, we are conscious that the next part of the story gives us some extra perspective. The crowds cheered and lauded Jesus as he entered Jerusalem; the same crowds turned on him only days later.



There is a bigger story going on at Palm Sunday than most people at the time could see. We have the benefit of the bible telling us the rest - we can see the journey of Jesus to the cross. But the clues were all there at the time: the King arriving into Jerusalem was on a donkey, not a war horse. As the crowd waved their palm branches and shouted “Hosanna”, many were expecting a leader who would fight their battles and liberate them from the Roman

Empire. What they got was a different kind of king - infinitely more powerful, yet vastly more humble. The week took a very different turn: in just a matter of days, Jesus would be executed as a criminal, silent before his abusers, humiliated and tortured.

And Jesus while awaiting death on the cross, cried out with the words “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” Are we like the crowds in the city of Jerusalem that day, quick to abandon our faith when things get tough or require more than we are willing to give? During this weekend’s Psalm, we are invited, through our palm bearer’s visual representation, to consider times in our own lives when we may choose to turn our backs on or abandon Jesus and the call of discipleship.

The Triduum—the three days from the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord’s Supper to the end of Easter Sunday—marks the most important time of the Church year. The word triduum is Latin for three days. In these three days, we culminate the entire liturgical year as we recall and experience the life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. We measure the three days of the Triduum from sundown to sundown, as the Jewish people do. We can look at the Easter Triduum as one single celebration that spans three days. As believers, we cannot separate the death of Jesus from his resurrection. In these important days of the Triduum we are called to gather and remember....

Holy Thursday—on this evening, at 7pm, we remember the Last Supper where Jesus gave us the Eucharist and commissioned his followers for service, doing all “in memory of Him” and by following his example of washing one another’s feet.

Good Friday—strange that this day might be called “good” when we hear the Passion of Christ remembering how Jesus suffered and was put to death on a cross. We might consider reflecting on the word “holy” in place of good because the sufferings and sacrifice of that day were necessary for the resurrection of Jesus and his victory over death. Good Friday is a more solemn day that once again involves fasting. On Good Friday, we also have the opportunity to participate in a ritual unique to this day. The cross, the symbol of our salvation, is brought forward for us to venerate at the 12:00 noon service. It is our opportunity to humble ourselves before the awesome saving action of Christ. Another way to honor this day is to join in our Outdoor Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm, with a simple meal of soup and water afterwards in the parish hall.

Holy Saturday—has been described as the interlude between the pain of the death of Jesus and the joy of His resurrection. In silent expectation, the Christian community relives the quiet darkness and stillness of the tomb and the loss of Jesus. A key word in this description is ‘silent’. While the modern world often resists or contradicts the value of silence, we, as believers, may find some peace and comfort here. In one translation of Psalm 62:5-6 we hear “For God alone my soul waits in silence, my hope comes from Him.” In the stillness and silence of this day, we can take the opportunity to listen carefully to the voice of God speaking deep into our hearts, inviting us in hope to believe for the many resurrection moments in our lives that are to come.

Easter Vigil & Easter Sunday—Hallelujah He is risen! At the Easter Vigil service, beginning at 8pm, we welcome new brothers and sisters into the Catholic faith. And on Easter Sunday, together, with hope-filled and joyful hearts, we praise God for the gift of NEW LIFE and the promise of the Resurrection! Easter Sunday Masses are at 6:00am, 8:00am, 9:30am, and 11:30am.