

## Palm Sunday April 5, 2020

Recently I read a story about a Catholic pastor who visited the parish school's kindergarten classroom. He began asking the young children some questions. First, he asked, "If I sold my car and gave all my money to the poor, would that get me into Heaven?"

"NO!" all the children answered.

"If I cleaned the church every day, mowed the yard, and kept everything neat and tidy, would that get me into Heaven?"

Again, the children shouted out, "NO!"

"What if I was kind to animals and gave candy to all the children, would that get me into Heaven?" the pastor asked.

Again, the children answered, "NO!"

"Well, then how can I get into Heaven?" the pastor asked.

A five-year-old boy shouted out, "YOU GOTTA BE DEAD!!!"

The pastor's line of questioning does point to a critical issue before us as we begin the holiest of all weeks of the year: "How do we get to heaven?" Or another way of asking is: "how do we become holy because we have to be holy to get into heaven?" This question is so important because the purpose of our lives, and especially during Holy Week, is to become holy.

Now to become holy, we first must understand what it means to be "holy." It's more than just being dead. And second, we must begin practice becoming holy, especially during this holiest of all weeks.

In Hebrew the word *holy* literally means *to be set apart*. That's a great definition. When we say people are *holy*, what we're really saying is that they are different than others around them—that they are *set apart* in a certain sense from other people because they are more faithful, more loving, more virtuous, more prayerful, and more obedient to God than the average person is, and that includes the average *believing* person.

We call this week *Holy Week* for a similar reason. This week is *holy* because it's supposed to be different. It's supposed to be *set apart* from the other 51 weeks of the year. That means for us Christians it's not supposed to be business as usual for the next 6 days!

After all, this was the week when God demonstrated in the most powerful way possible how much He loves us. This was the week that made it possible for us to receive forgiveness for our sins, regardless of how many and how bad our sins might be. This was the week that salvation was won for us. This was the week that made heaven possible for us after we die.

The more we make Holy Week *holy* for ourselves by breaking away from our daily routines and consciously enter into the Holy Week experience, the more we give God

the opportunity to transform our minds and hearts by the power of His saving grace and make us holy.

With the coronavirus crisis, all of us, in a very real sense, have been *set apart* through self-isolation to prevent the spread of the virus. However, we can be isolated, yet still not make this week *holy* because there are all kinds of distractions, even at home.

Even though our churches buildings are still closed and you are isolated in your homes, here are ways that you can become *holy*.

First, even though Archbishop Jose Gomez has released you from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass, God still commands us to “*Keep holy the Lord’s Day.*” You can do this by preparing for every Sunday, Daily Masses, and for all the Holy Week Services by reading the Readings for each day as a family and discussing them, and then ending with a prayer. You should participate in every Mass and service by watching our livestream. As a family, you can pray Morning and Evening prayer together, pray the Rosary together, and pray grace before and after your meals. You also can pray the Angelus at noon and the Divine Mercy Novena at 3:00 p.m. Now you can find the Readings for Sunday, Daily Mass, and Holy Week services and all the prayers I just mentioned by Googling them or visiting our website.

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday (April 6, 7, and 8), we will livestream Mass at St. Rose of Lima at 5:30 p.m., and we encourage you to join us in prayer. Even though you cannot physically receive Holy Communion, you can make a spiritual communion.

Also on Monday evening, April 6, 2020, Archbishop Jose Gomez will celebrate the Chrism Mass in the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels. You can view the Cathedral’s livestream of the Chrism Mass. Additionally, the Archbishop will celebrate the liturgies of the Sacred Paschal Triduum at the Cathedral, which will also be livestreamed.

On Thursday, April 9, 2020, St. Rose of Lima will livestream a bi-lingual Mass of the Lord’s Supper at 7:00 p.m.

On Friday, April 10, 2020, St. Rose of Lima will livestream Good Friday Services in English, starting with the Stations of the Cross at 1:00 p.m. Reflections on Jesus’ Seven Last Words from the Cross at 1:45 p.m., the Solemn Good Friday Service at 3:00 p.m.. We will conclude the Good Friday Services with the Divine Mercy Novena, which follows at the end of the Good Friday Solemn Service.

On Saturday, April 11, 2020, St. Rose of Lima will livestream a bi-lingual Easter Vigil Mass, starting at 7:00 p.m.

And on Easter Sunday, April 12, 2020, St. Rose of Lima will livestream Easter Sunday Mass at 10:00 a.m. in English.

You can find all these services and the hours for them on our parish website: [strosesv.com](http://strosesv.com).

The question for this week still remains: what will you do to make this Holy Week *holy* for you? Make sure you answer that question today for yourself, and adjust your schedule accordingly.

It will be worth it because, when we do, in fact, make Holy Week *holy* for ourselves, we give Almighty God the opportunity *to make us holy for Himself*—which is how we get to heaven—and not as that 5-year old kindergartner reminded the pastor: “*You gotta be dead!*”

God Bless and Stay well,

Fr, Joe