



## HOLY WEEK

April 2022

When I was young, Easter meant very little to us. The really big thing was Lent. The great time was at noon on Holy Saturday when we could eat candy and indulge in whatever else we gave up for Lent. This was an incredible distortion of the Church's message.

Today, we have another distortion of Easter. The big day is Good Friday. For many, if not most, Easter is an afterthought in much of our popular religious practice. The point we need to understand is that *we are an Easter People!!*

The Church's teaching is very clear. The Death and Resurrection are one event! We take thirteen weeks to celebrate, in the most solemn and beautiful way, the central reality of our faith, the Pascal Mystery. This one event includes the Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ. This same event is celebrated and experienced in every Mass.

We take a good chunk of the Church year to recall this story. However, it is so much more than a history lesson.

In the thirteen weeks from Ash Wednesday to Pentecost we have three seasons of the Church Year. The main purpose of the prayer and penance of Lent is to prepare us to be spiritually ready to celebrate the three holy days of the Triduum, Holy Thursday to Easter Sunday. The seven weeks of the Easter season are a time of prayer and reflection on the central reality of our faith, the Pascal Mystery, Christ Crucified and Christ Risen.

Here is the bottom line of all this material. The Church understands the Triduum, and the liturgy in general, in this way. It is not a reenactment. It is not simply a telling of the story no matter how solemn. We do not repeat history. This is what the Church teaches. We celebrate the Mystery and in the celebration we are present to the Mystery, the one and singular and historical event. The power of the Spirit in the Church makes us present to the saving event, the Pascal Mystery.

The celebration is the power and presence of God's saving grace coming into our lives here and now. This one saving event is not broken into parts. It is the Mystery of the saving action of God in Jesus Christ. We are entering into the deepest reality of our present life. We are experiencing here and now in our worship the presence of the saving love calling us to life. When we receive communion, the minister does not say this is a remembrance of the Body of Christ. The words state the reality. This is the Body of Christ!

So this week we have the most special of all the most sacred events in our liturgy. This is the most hallowed time to celebrate, and in the celebration not only recall, but be present to the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is what liturgy does. It brings us into the presence of the Pascal Mystery that we celebrate. We do not repeat it. We enter into it. This why we are Easter People!