



Today is the Fifth Sunday in Lent. It is also called Passion Sunday. The Altar hanging has been changed to red as a sign that we have entered the last two weeks of the Season. The word “passion” is from the Latin word which means must be

“that which endured”.

Next Sunday is Palm Sunday and it marks Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem where He would die. Each day next week has a Gospel reading assigned which records our Lord’s Passion. And the last three days have special names: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. “Maundy” is from the Latin word “mandatum” which means “mandate” or “commandment”. It relates to the new “commandment” which Jesus gave His disciples as He washed their feet, just before He was arrested. “Good” Friday was originally called “God’s Friday” – the Friday when the Son of God laid down His life on the Cross. Despite our Lord’s suffering and death, that Friday was a “good” day for all of humankind.

For centuries, the Church has used the whole Church building to observe the last three days of Lent and communicate Jesus’ passion. For example, on Maundy Thursday night, after reading the Passion, the Altar is stripped – a reminder of how the Lord Himself was mocked and stripped and spit upon. Following that, a Vigil is kept in response to Jesus’ question of Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane: “Could you not watch with Me one hour?” (St. Matthew 26.40)

Traditionally, the Holy Communion is not celebrated on Good Friday. Instead, Morning Prayer and the Litany are prayed and the Altar is washed. This washing is meant to provide a brief time of meditation on how our Lord’s Body was taken down from the Cross and prepared for burial.

On Holy Saturday, the Church remains desolate as we remember how Jesus’ Body was laid in the sepulchre. And, later, on Holy Saturday night, in anticipation of Easter morning, there is the Easter Vigil when the Church reads the Old Testament prophecies on the Resurrection.

Passiontide is a rich time for worship and reflection. In this broken world, let us give thanks and proclaim, “Jesus loves me, this I know.”