



Reflection from Deacon Ross Beaudoin

Today, Palm Sunday, signals that our Lenten journey is coming to a close. Our arrival at our destination of Easter is just one week away. We have only the days of this Holy Week remaining to finish preparing for the great resurrection feast. The last three days, the Holy Week Triduum, are important for our community and personal preparation.

When I was a kid (in the 1940s) the special services for Holy Week - Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday - were not easy for ordinary people to participate in. They were scheduled in the mornings. Most people were at work or school. These greatest days of the Church's liturgical year had thus been given over to the clergy. The wags would say of Holy Thursday, for example, "The Lord's Supper has become a clerical breakfast." That's kinda what had happened.

When people arrived at Easter they were not as prepared as they could have been or wanted to be. Individually and as a community they had gone from the celebration of Palm Sunday directly to Easter Resurrection. They had not participated in the sacred triduum of the Mass of the Lord's Supper, the Passion of the Lord and the lighting of the new fire at the Easter Vigil. This unfortunate situation had developed over centuries and was just "taken for granted." Fortunately, Pope Pius XII was attune to the need for the people to take part in the Holy Week Triduum. He made changes that allowed for the services to be celebrated in the evenings...as had been the custom in the early Church.

I do not know the story of how Pius XII became convinced of the need to make this change for the benefit of the Faithful. But some way he did come to realize that the Faithful were being left out and they needed to be included.

What a blessing this revision of the liturgy has brought us: we all can participate in the sacred triduum (or as much of it as our lives allow). Then we will be more prepared to sing alleluias on Easter Sunday and going forward carry these celebrations in our hearts and lives.

This Palm Sunday there is still time for us to do our best to prepare for Easter. At St. James the Holy Week Triduum services are at 7 pm on Holy Thursday and Good Friday and at 8 pm on Holy Saturday. Participation in one, two or three of these services will yield good results for personal lives and our celebration of Easter.

I'd like to add a post-script. I do not know how it was that Pope Pius XII came to the decision to change Holy Week and make it more accessible to the Faithful. But some way he must have had input from people about the importance of all being able to fully participate in these significant moments of our life in Christ.

In our day Pope Francis has set up a way for all people to make their experience of Church and their needs known to him and our bishops. The word used is "synodality" – a way of sharing from the grass roots up. This exercise of synodality has the potential for making the Church a better faith-home, but only if we do our part and share our feelings and needs. Please go to <https://www.synodresources.org/> for more information. If nothing else, knowing what is happening in the Church and being aware that all are encouraged to share their thoughts and needs can be a liberating feeling! Easter resurrection and joy come in many forms!

If we'd had a SYNODAL approach decades ago, we may have had less liturgies as "clergy breakfasts" and more communal liturgies and enlightened Church governance a long time before these things have even begun to happen.

See you in church. Happy Holy Week....

Deacon Ross