

A Reflection on Holy Week

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During Holy Week, we gather in the emergency room. There's no time to lose—and everything to lose. This is the week when we make some space in the inner room so the paschal mystery—the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus—can have its holy way with us. When we do, we begin to see how the paschal mystery finds a home in our own story. We mark this spot with an “X” and note that this is the very place where hope is born.

As Holy Week begins, this is the place where we might start to empty our hearts of those attitudes that keep us from being true to the image of God within us. St. Paul advises us to take on the attitude of Jesus, who emptied himself, humbly accepting death - death on a cross. Because Jesus did not “deem” equality with God as something to be grasped at, but instead, emptied himself, this makes us “redeemable.”

We have seen this paschal mystery of faith etched on the faces of patients who have struggled with illness and survived surgeries of every sort without yielding to despair. We have heard this paschal mystery of faith proclaimed in the voices of those who have suffered and say to us, “I would have never made it without my faith.” We have felt this paschal mystery of faith in the embrace of those who have come to be with us in our pain and our loss. They come not with answers or explanations or pious predictions about how things will get better. No, they come because they have found that place of the paschal mystery in their own souls and stories, have tasted their own tears, know their own fears, but believe they are redeemable.

These are the people who, like Jesus, empty themselves so that God may fill them with the fullness of divine life. These are the people who have stood in that dark, damp place in the soul where the light has grown dim and tears have fallen like rain who are filled with a light that is not their own.

When we encounter this paschal mystery of faith, we are moved to silence. That is why the sign we sometimes see when walking or driving near a hospital: “Quiet, Hospital Zone” is the road sign we observe this week on our journey of recovery. More than any other week, Holy Week is the time to listen. And what will we hear?

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Jesus gives voice to the scream buried deep within our broken hearts. In this scream that splits the skies, that tore “the curtain of the temple in two, from top to bottom,” is our profession of faith.

We believe in God's presence even when God seems absent.

This Holy Week invites us to tap this passion inside of each of our hearts. The passion of this Holy Week, found in the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus, is the passion to forgive and be forgiven. It is the passion to hollow out our lives of all resentment toward those who have hurt us. It is the passion to let whatever residue of guilt or shame that lingers in our souls to be wiped clean and redeemed. During this week, we remember how we are redeemed and reclaimed as God's beloved through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

In these holy days, may we know God's passion and rediscover our own.

Let us pray together:

God of all Creation,
“though he was in the form of God,”
Jesus “did not regard equality with God something to be grasped”
But “emptied himself, taking the form of a slave.”
In a world where many are grasping
for power, fame and fortune,
the highest place and the biggest payoff,
Jesus moves in the opposite direction.

During this Holy Week,
help us to tap the passion inside of each of our hearts.
Give us the grace to touch and taste again
the passion that moves us and motivates us,
sustains us in those dark and dreary days,
and strengthens us in those times when we are all alone.

May the passion of Christ
help us to know God’s passion
and rediscover our own.

+ Amen.