



The Holy See

BENEDICT XVI

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Saint Peter's Square
Wednesday, 31 March 2010

Easter Triduum

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are living the holy days that invite us to meditate on the central events of our Redemption, the essential core of our faith. Tomorrow the Easter Triduum begins, the fulcrum of the whole Liturgical Year in which we are called to silence and prayer in order to contemplate the mystery of the Passion, death and Resurrection of the Lord.

In their Homilies the Fathers often referred to these days which, as St Athanasius observed in one of his *Easter Letters*, bring "us to a new beginning, even the announcement of the blessed Passover, in which the Lord was sacrificed" (*Letter 5, 1-2: PG 26, 1379*).

I therefore urge you to live these days intensely, so that they may decisively direct the life of each one to generous and convinced adherence to Christ, who died and rose for us.

Tomorrow morning, the Holy Chrism Mass, a morning prelude to Holy Thursday, will see priests gathered with their own Bishop. During an important Eucharistic celebration which usually takes place in the diocesan cathedrals, the oil of the sick and of the catechumens and chrism will be blessed. In addition, the Bishop and Priests will renew the priestly promises that they spoke on the day of their Ordination. This year, this action acquires a very special prominence because it is

taking place in the context of the [Year for Priests](#), which I established to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the death of the holy Curé d'Ars. To all priests I would like to repeat the hope I expressed at the end of my [Letter for its inauguration](#): "In the footsteps of the holy Curé of Ars, let yourselves be enthralled by him. In this way you too will be, for the world in our time, heralds of hope, reconciliation and peace!".

Tomorrow afternoon we shall celebrate the institution of the Eucharist. Writing to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul strengthened the early Christians in the truth of the Eucharistic Mystery, conveying to them what he himself had learned. "The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my Body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me'. In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my Blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Cor 11: 23-25).

These words clearly express Christ's intention: under the species of the bread and the wine, he makes himself really present with his Body given and his Blood poured out as a sacrifice of the New Covenant. At the same time, he constitutes the Apostles and their successors ministers of this Sacrament, which he entrusts to his Church as a supreme proof of his love.

We also commemorate with an evocative rite the gesture of Jesus who washes the Apostles' feet (Jn 13: 1-25). For the Evangelist this act comes to portray the whole of Jesus' life and reveals his love to the end, an infinite love that is capable of preparing man for communion with God and of setting him free. At the end of the Holy Thursday Liturgy the Church puts the Blessed Sacrament in a specially prepared place that represents Jesus' loneliness and mortal anguish in Gethsemane. Before the Eucharist, the faithful contemplate Jesus in the hour of his solitude and pray that all the loneliness in the world may cease. This liturgical itinerary is likewise an invitation to seek the intimate encounter with the Lord in prayer, to recognize Jesus among those who are lonely, to watch with him and to proclaim him with the light of one's own life.

On Good Friday we shall commemorate the Passion and death of the Lord. Jesus wanted to give his life as a sacrifice for the forgiveness of humanity's sins, choosing to this end the most brutal and humiliating death: crucifixion. There is an inseparable connection between the Last Supper and Jesus' death. At the Last Supper Jesus gives his Body and his Blood, that is, his earthly existence, himself, anticipating his death and transforming it into an act of love. Thus he makes death which by its nature is the end, the destruction of every relationship an act of the communication of himself, a means of salvation and of the proclamation of the victory of love. In this way, Jesus becomes the key to understanding the Last Supper, which is an anticipation of the transformation of violent death into a voluntary sacrifice; into an act of love that redeems and saves the world.

Holy Saturday is marked by a profound silence. The Churches are bare and no special Liturgies are planned. In this time of waiting and hope, believers are invited to prayer, reflection and

conversion, also by means of the sacrament of Reconciliation, in order to take part, intimately renewed, in the celebration of Easter.

In the night of Holy Saturday, during the solemn Easter Vigil, "mother of all vigils", this silence will be broken by the singing of the *Alleluia* which announces Christ's Resurrection and proclaims the victory of light over darkness, of life over death. The Church will rejoice in the encounter with her Lord, entering Easter Day which the Lord will inaugurate by rising from the dead.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us prepare to live intensely this Sacred Triduum, now at hand, so as to be ever more deeply inserted into the Mystery of Christ, who died and rose for us. May the Most Holy Virgin accompany us on this spiritual journey. May she, who followed Jesus in his Passion and who stood beneath the Cross, lead us into the Paschal Mystery so that we may experience the joy and peace of the Risen One.

With these sentiments, from this moment I offer you all my most cordial good wishes for a holy Easter, extending them to your Communities and to all your loved ones.

To Special Groups

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am pleased to welcome all the English-speaking visitors present at today's Audience, especially those from England, Japan, Canada and the United States. I also greet the various student groups present, including those taking part in the annual "Univ Congress". Upon all of you I invoke God's Blessings of joy and peace!

In addressing the Italian-speaking pilgrims, I greet the university students from various countries who are taking part in the international Congress sponsored by the Prelature of Opus Dei. Dear friends, you have come to Rome for Holy Week for an experience of faith, friendship and spiritual enrichment. I ask you to reflect on the importance of university studies in forming that "Catholic or universal mentality" that St Josémaría described as: "a breadth of vision and a vigorous endeavour to study more deeply the things that are permanently alive and unchanged in Catholic orthodoxy". May the desire to encounter Jesus Christ personally increase in each and every one, to witness to him in every context.

Lastly, I address my cordial thoughts to the *young people*, the *sick*, and the *newlyweds*. May contemplation of the Passion, death and Resurrection of Jesus, dear *young people*, make you ever stronger in your Christian witness. And may you, dear *sick people*, draw from the Cross of Christ daily support to get the better of moments of trial and discouragement. May you, dear *newlyweds*, receive from the Paschal Mystery which we contemplate in these days, an

encouragement to make your family a place of faithful and fruitful love.

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