

## The last days of Holy Week<sup>1</sup>

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament  
Paris, Tuesday, April 3, 1860

Here is the schedule for the coming week. Tomorrow, there will be adoration only until noon, to give time to make the repository. Make your adoration in the morning. On Holy Thursday, there will be Mass and Communion in the morning, so that you can eat something. Adoration will be as usual, except there will be no Benediction. On Friday there is the Mass of the Presanctified, and you will still come for adoration. There will be the veneration of the Cross and the Divine Office. Likewise on Saturday, the Mass as usual is at eight o'clock, since that is the most convenient time. In the Roman liturgy, as you know, we receive Communion on Holy Saturday.

What will you do this week? Personally, since I cannot give you any other special conference: the First Communion retreat will use up all my time.

**This week we celebrate the mysteries of the Passion. They are great and solemn; meditate on them. You must enter into their spirit, and follow the grace of each day.**

Tomorrow, we recall the betrayal of Judas. The Church has always considered **Wednesday** as a day of sadness. It is a day of penance in many religious orders. When permission is given to eat meat, Wednesday is excluded. On that day, our Lord was sold. This crime is often repeated through bad Communion, and the Church remembers this by the penance that she requires from her children.

[...]

**Holy Thursday** recalls the institution of the Holy Eucharist. The Church forgets about Lent and sings the *Gloria in excelsis*. But its joy is tinged with sadness since it is so closely linked with **Good Friday**. This joy was bought at a great price, so great a sacrifice that mitigates the full joy.

**This is your great feast, as well as ours**, since our Lord gave the Eucharist on Holy Thursday and we were present there. Surely, he had around him the communities that would be marked by the Holy Eucharist. Since we are the most privileged before him, our Lord blessed us ahead of time. Eighteen centuries is nothing for God; everything is present, and we were there. Our Lord was planning the priesthood that would bring Communion to the world, it was the First Communion. If it were not the Lenten Season, this would be our greatest feast, with adoration and the Institution of the Eucharist. We must celebrate it well, and thank our Lord for his goodness and love.

**In the Garden of Olives, our Lord** remained from nine to midnight perspiring blood and water. It was the passion of love of Jesus Christ. Good Friday will be the passion of his sufferings. You will not sleep, reflecting on this till midnight. The apostles were sleeping, since sadness tends to make one drowsy, as the gospel says: *He found them sleeping from grief* (Lk 22:45). As his hour approached, their hearts were closing. That's sufficient material for Holy Thursday.

**On Friday**, follow Jesus by reading the gospels, aware that at midnight our Lord was arrested, bound hand and foot, and, with a rope around his neck, led to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiphas. Treated like a scoundrel, he entered Jerusalem where, five days earlier, he had come in triumph. That's the way people are. From Annas he is led to Caiphas, amidst insults and beatings that would not be hurled at the

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worst of men. Evil leaders went to sleep, while our Lord was handed over to the soldiers of the high priest to be ridiculed all night.

The following morning, when evil leaders woke up, our Lord was led to Pilate for scourging and his presentation [to the crowds] with *Ecce Homo*. Pilate then forced Jesus across the city to see Herod, who despised him, and questioned him again. The Roman soldiers mocked and insulted him. At approximately nine o'clock, they began the journey to Calvary. Only at noon, when the preparations were complete, was our Lord crucified. You should follow the way of the cross. **From noon to three o'clock**, ponder the Seven Last Words [Cf. Mt 27:46; Lk 23:34, 43, 46; Jn 19:26, 28, 30]. At three o'clock see the death of Jesus Christ, and notice what happens.

With our Lord in the tomb, **keep the Blessed Virgin company**. Alone and grieving, she had only a few poor Christians and St. John, who could hardly replace our Lord.

She had been very strong, the strong woman, till the very moment of our Lord's death. *She was standing* (cf. Jn 19:25), according to the Gospel, and not as represented in some paintings. She stood, facing the cross. When our Lord died, the redemption was complete. The Blessed Virgin must have collapsed under the weight of sorrow. The victory had been won; she could now weep freely with the apostles.

[...] **Follow the mysteries of this week**. The Eucharist should not absorb your attention at this time. Follow the mysteries, and take part in them. Usually we do this too lightly, in a superficial way. Let us enter more deeply into the sufferings and humiliations of the love of our Lord, so that we may love him more.



### **Points for reflection:**

The Paschal Triduum is the high point of the liturgical year. It is the central mystery that gives meaning to all the rest. In this meditation we are invited to follow each event of the last days of the life of Jesus. What means will you use to allow yourself to be touched by this time of grace?

