

## Nothing More Beautiful

Heavenly Father,  
we come before you in praise and thanksgiving  
for you have called us to be your own.

You sent your Word

to bring us truth

and your Spirit to make us holy.

Through them we come to know

the Beauty that is You.

Draw us to a new encounter with Jesus, your Son.

Deepen our love for His Church.

Help us to embrace anew

the beauty of our faith in all of its richness.

Empower us to see there is nothing more beautiful

than our relationship with You,

so that we may reflect to others your image,

in which we have been created.

We pray that, rooted and grounded in your love,

and through the healing power of the Cross of your Son,

we may be strengthened for mission

by your Holy Spirit.

We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.

Amen

## The Catholic Women's League of Canada



## Spiritual Program

### A REFLECTION ON HOLY WEEK



## REFLECTION ON HOLY WEEK

### Palm Sunday

**All glory, laud, and honor,  
to thee, Redeemer King:  
To whom the lips of children  
Made sweet hosannas ring.**

Theodulph, Ninth Century



On Palm Sunday, palms are distributed to remind us of the Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, and the opening of the liturgy is quite joyous: "All Glory, Laud and Honor, to Thee Redeemer King!". However the cries of Hosanna" suddenly change to "crucify!" The Passion narrative is read

by a reader (or readers) and the congregation takes part. This is a disturbing service, and rightly so. We, too, proclaim "crucify!" The service is a striking reminder of what St. Paul tells us, "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

### Maundy Thursday and the Paschal Meal

**Having completed the forty days  
that bring profit to our souls.  
We beseech thee in thy love for us  
also to behold thy Passion.**

Byzantine vespers

When Jesus made his last journey to Jerusalem, he did so for the express purpose of observing the Feast of the Passover with the disciples. Maundy Thursday's emphasis on ritual washing also gave rise to the ancient tradition of spring cleaning, evidently related to the Jewish custom of ritually cleaning the home in preparation for the Feast of Passover. Everything was to be cleaned and polished.



## CLOSING PRAYER

There is nothing more beautiful  
than to be surprised by the Gospel,  
by the encounter with Christ.  
There is nothing more beautiful  
than to know Him  
and to speak to others  
of our friendship with Him.

*Pope Benedict XVI*

ALL: Nothing More Beautiful (back cover)



The church is then flooded with light, the tomb is empty, death is conquered! The veils of mourning are lifted, bells ring, the organ blasts out its mighty proclamation, "Alleluia, the Lord is Risen, Indeed." In an explosion of joy, we sing the Gloria for the first time since the last Sunday in Epiphany, rejoicing in the promise of life in Christ and celebrating the change of the course of Creation from death to life.



**After the congregation has joined together in a reaffirmation of faith, the Celebrant blesses them with water from the font (the Asperges) as a reminder of their own baptism into Christ's Passion and Resurrection.**

#### **CLOSING BLESSING**

May our Holy Week be blessed with the abiding presence of God's great gift of Love in Jesus, so that our Easter may resound with Alleluias!

#### **LEAGUE PRAYER**



On Holy Thursday, Christians often eat together a Passover Seder. This special meal stresses the Christian significance of elements of the traditional Jewish Passover meal (seder) as it may have been celebrated in our Lord's time. It is neither a re-enactment of the Last Supper, nor a Jewish service. But we believe this festive meal is a very expressive way of honouring the historic origins of our faith as well as the importance of this day of Holy Week and the significance of the Passover to Jesus and why we know him to be "our Passover" who is "sacrificed for us."



#### **The Altar of Repose**

**"If we really believe that which He declares  
to be His own flesh and blood  
is Jesus Christ giving Himself to us  
under the form of bread and wine,  
how can we help thanking and therefore adoring  
(for to thank God is to adore) the unspeakable gift,  
as well as the most bountiful Giver?  
- seeing that in this case both are one.- "**

John Keble, Anglican priest, poet, and theologian.

The practice of keeping watch with our Lord can be traced to Christ's appeal to his disciples in the garden of Gethsemane on the eve of the crucifixion: "Could you not watch one hour with me?" By our vigil with the Blessed Sacrament on the Altar of Repose, we can answer Jesus with an emphatic "yes!", knowing that we are in the presence of the same Jesus, now veiled in the form of bread and wine, as were the disciples who witnessed His resurrection.

In order to fully appreciate this devotion, we keep in mind the teaching on the Blessed Sacrament. As Catholics, we share with our Lutheran and Eastern Orthodox brothers and sisters, a firm belief in the real sacramental Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

When the priest celebrate the Eucharist, it is not merely a commemoration of the Last Supper. Instead, the Eucharist is a living witness, both to the sacrifice on Calvary and to the banquet prepared for us in heaven. Even though Christ in his glory is veiled from our eyes, he is present to us in a very real, very tangible way.

Following communion, and the post communion prayer at the Maundy Thursday Eucharist, the Sacrament to be reserved for Good Friday is taken in simple procession to the Altar of Repose.

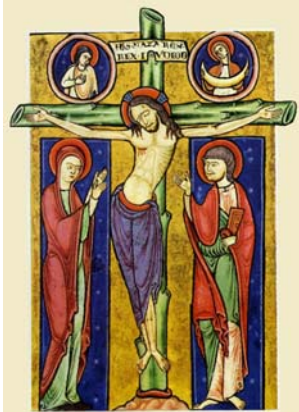
The celebrant and assisting ministers remove chasuble, dalmatic and stoles and strip the altar. All movable hangings and ornaments are removed. Crosses that cannot be removed are veiled if not previously accomplished as we reflect on the Psalm: "They divided my garments among them; they cast lots for my clothing. " Psalm 22:18

### Good Friday

**"Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit."**

Luke 23:46

Good Friday is one of the days in the Church calendar set aside



for "special acts of discipline and self-denial". Traditionally that has been understood to mean fasting and attendance at Church at some time during the day or evening.

On this solemn and holy day when we remember that Our Lord was obedient "even unto death", it is not permitted to celebrate the Eucharist. However, Holy Communion will be administered from the

same Reserved Sacrament before which the faithful have been in vigil at the Altar of Repose.

### The Great Vigil of Easter

**This is the night when Christ broke the  
bonds of death and hell,  
and rose victorious from the grave.**

The Exultet, from The Great Vigil of Easter

The Great Vigil of Easter is the most joyous and beautiful liturgy of the Church Year. This most ancient of Holy Days is rich in symbolism, saturated with the Word of God, and is, in fact, the principal celebration of the Resurrection of Our Lord.

Throughout the ages, it has been in this service that countless saints have proclaimed, "Alleluia, Christ is risen!" Indeed, when the Easter Vigil is not celebrated, there is a significant loss in the Christian's subsequent Easter worship. If we are to "die with Christ" in Baptism, then it is unthinkable that we should not experience the total darkness of the tomb, in order that the splendid light of the Resurrection might be all the more glorious.



The climax of the Christian year, The Great Vigil of Easter is a service of transition, bridging the time between Lent and Easter, Passion and Resurrection, great sorrow and resounding joy. The Vigil allows us, like Mary Magdalene, to visit the dark tomb only to find it empty, the Light of the world having risen from the dead. It is a lengthy and elaborate service, rich with scripture, music and ceremony.

The readings from scripture chronicle the history of man's relationship with God, from the creation and the Fall to Israel's deliverance and God's renewed covenant with His children. These lessons are shortened versions of the final instruction given to the early Church's catechumen, or candidates for baptism.