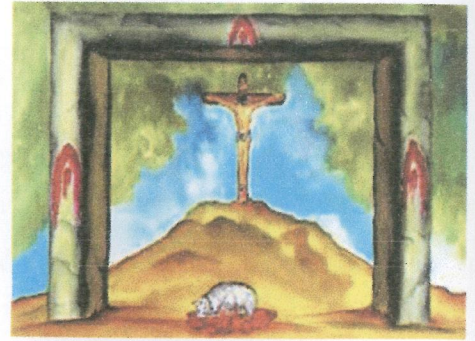


I'm sure that all of us, if we were asked which is the most important feast of the year we would identify it as Easter. If you were to ask any one of our Jewish brothers or sisters the same question, their answer would immediately be the *Pesah—Passover*; it is the festival of liberation and renewal in which our Christian feast of Easter finds its root. Since the time of Moses, the Passover has commemorated Israel's Exodus from Egypt. This central and pivotal event became the standard by which all other experiences of liberation and renewal were measured and understood.



When Isaiah (in this Sunday's first reading) describes the exiles' return from Babylon to Judah in Passover-like language and with Passover-like imagery, his fellow Jews easily understood the message. And when the Church wants to explore the meaning and implications of Easter she does so in Passover-like language and with Passover-like imagery. We have been exploring this in depth at the *journey of faith* evenings recently and have enjoyed seeing how everything in the *Old* covenant was leading to the *New* covenant which is sealed in Jesus' own blood.

Although the starting point of Passover is the historical event, we refer to it in its spiritual sense. Jewish teachers have long understood the Passover as also referring to the liberation of each person from her or his "inner" Egypt. In a state of spiritual enslavement, the mind and heart are in exile, cut off from the closeness of God without which there is no survival.

We may not always be able to solve the big issues of our day as clearly, (look at the news any evening and we see that!) but the evidence of our continuing need for conversion to the Lord and to deeper and deeper immersion into His covenant is all around us. The value of our celebration of the Easter Triduum next week — our Passover — is that it draws us into reflection and meaning on our own lives and enables us to move forward in the light of the the Passover of Jesus. That is why we begin the most solemn vigil of Easter [**above all, whatever else you miss in our parish community during the year, please don't miss the Easter vigil**] with the cry *Christ our Light—Thanks be to God*. Without him we would just be feeling around in the darkness.

As we come towards the end of Lent and the climax of the Triduum, we are invited to a deeper reflection — to an understanding of ourselves and of how God is at work in our lives. In the midst of Israel's trial, Isaiah is pointing out how God is at work in their lives (and so, in our lives as well!) We need reflection and conversation with God in our spiritual development. This is more than a search for the right thing to do: **it is a search for who we are**, how we are growing and maturing as we approach the Passover 2025.

The late Cardinal Hume put it this way:

"Within each of us is an inner sanctuary, where none may enter, save perhaps one or two close friends, allowed for a brief moment a quick cursory glimpse of what is hidden within. It is our inner selves, often an area where we feel ill at ease. Here we experience suffering, that dreaded visitor, a thief that steals from us our peace of mind, our joy, our hope. Here too however, we experience Love, the guest which brings happiness and contentment. It is into this area, the depth of our being that God seeks to enter and to dwell. Suffering and love are often, in different way, heralds of his arrival. He knocks at our door. We are free to open or not."

Please do your best not to miss the grace that the Easter Triduum offers us!

Next Sunday is Palm Sunday and the opening of Holy Week.

There will be Sung Vespers and Benediction in the Cathedral at 4pm.