

Saint Thomas the Apostle Parish
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Confirmation Class. Lesson No. 5; March 23, 2021 Handout No. 1

Dear Students,

Last class we briefly reviewed what you have learned so far about the SACRAMENTS of the Catholic Church, and we are now moving in the direction of one particular Sacrament; that is the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Tonight, I would like to accomplish 2 objectives with you:

- **ONE** – to remind ourselves of **WHY** our FAITH and RELIGION is anchored in the PASCHAL MYSTERY of Jesus (remember, how wonderfully you told me what is the Paschal Mystery and why these THREE MOST HOLY DAYS of our faith, that is Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday are so important to us?)
- **TWO** – to learn **WHY** we call OURSELVES THE PEOPLE OF THE GOOD NEWS or simply the People of the GOSPEL?

So far you have been learning about the **SIGNIFICANCE** and the **IMPORTANCE** of the so called CHURCH LITURGICAL CYCLES – or in other words – about the CHURCH LITURGICAL CALENDAR.

And ever since you were well, much younger – let’s take a look at your 2nd and 3rd grades – you have learned how the LITURGICAL CALENDAR of the Church works through COLOR – CODED TEMPLATES you have been making during numerous workshops in the past.

Now, as you all see (from your own participation in our parish liturgical life, your own ongoing formation, your own prayer life) we are in the **LITURGICAL SEASON OF LENT**.

It begins each year with the celebration of **ASH WEDNESDAY** (do you remember what we distribute to every believer during that day?) and it consists of **40 DAYS** of so - called **PENITENTIAL PRACTICES**: PRAYER, WORKS OF CHARITY, and of FASTING (for Catholics between the age 14 – 60).

The culminating point of **LENT** is **HOLY WEEK**, with **THREE VERY SPECIAL DAYS** called the **Holy TRIDUUM** consisting of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday (you were excellent telling me what happened – according to the Gospels about Jesus on each of these days);

All that is to **BETTER** prepare us **EACH YEAR** to celebrate joyfully the **RESURRECTION OF CHRIST JESUS** on **EASTER**.

You also have realized right away, that some of the important **HOLY DAYS** of our Catholic Church are set on specific days (like Christmas, set for December 25, etc.) but some are so called **MOVABLE** – they could fall on different calendar days over the years.

EASTER is a perfect example of one such **MOVABLE SOLEMNITY**, and here you have a bit of a simple explanation why it happens that way. Please see the handout about our (**WESTER**) and Jewish (**LUNAR**) calendars.

So, in short, you see now how **EASTER**, for us Catholics, always follows the Jewish (**LUNAR**) calendar celebration of the **FEAST OF PASSOVER**.

In short, the **JEWISH PASSOVER** always falls on the **FIRST SABBATH** (a weekly Jewish celebration, that lasts from Friday sunset to Saturday Sunset) after the **FIRST FULL MOON** in the **SPRING**.

Therefore, Easter could fall any time between March 22 and April 25.

Now, What is that **GOSPEL** – or GOOD NEWS?

It is a very **CONSISTENT MESSAGE** that each could read on the pages of the first 4 **BOOKS** of the **NEW TESTAMENT**.

The FIRST PART of the Good News is a **MESSAGE** about Jesus and His **SAVING ACTION** – that is, His **OWN SACRIFICE** for you and Me that He **OFFERED** on the Wood of the Cross.

The SECOND PART of the GOOD NEWS is that the **SACRIFICE OF JESUS** on the Wood of the Cross was **NOT the END**, or His **FINAL WORD** for us.

The most important part of the **GOOD NEWS** – the **GOSPEL** about Jesus Christ - is that **He RESURRECTED!**

HE is the **FIRST ONE** to be **RESURRECTED** by the **POWER OF GOD**, and **HE** promises us that **WE TOO** will be **RESURRECTED** on the **LAST DAY** in completely changed, **GLORIFIED, RESURRECTED BODIES**.

But Hey, there is a **CATCH** here, there is always a **CATCH**, there is **NEVER A FREE LUNCH** – even with **JESUS!**

The CATCH IS that the **RESURRECTION** will be experienced by **EVERYONE** - but for **SOME** – it will be the **RESURRECTION TO LIFE EVERLASTING**, in other words, **Resurrection to LIVE FOREVER WITH GOD and JESUS IN HEAVEN**

But SADLY – for SOME – it will be the **RESURRECTION to HELL** – to final **DAMNATION**, and unquenchable **FIRE** (please read: Matthew 13:50 and Matthew 18:8 and Matthew 5:22 and Matthew 18:9 and Luke 16:24 and Mark 9:43 – 48, and Revelation 19:20 and Revelation 20:10 to Revelation 21:8)

THAT IS precisely **WHY I**, as your village priest, tries to do whatever it takes so **ALL** of **YOU**, not just **SOME**, not just a **FEW**, but **ALL** of **YOU**, would end up in the **1st CATEGORY: With God forever in HEAVEN – that's it!**

Therefore, as you can see, we do have a tremendous responsibility in not only **FORMING WELL our own CONSCIENCE** (inner – sanctuary, the seed of principles, the very part of me that distinguishes between right and wrong) but also my **MISSION** as a Catholic in the 21st Century is to **HELP OTHERS** to learn how to form their **CONSCIENCE** well.