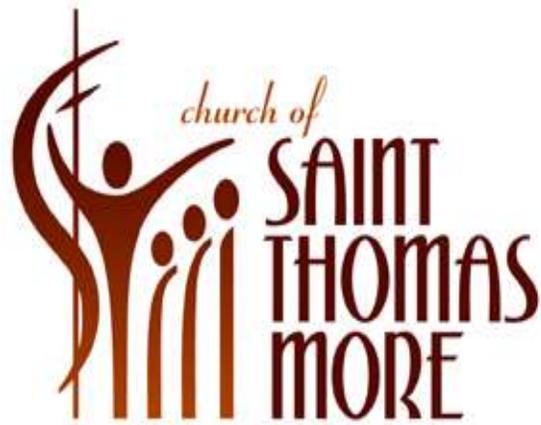


Easter – One Day = 50 Days

Even though the huge crowds of Easter Sunday morning disappear as quickly as a Christmas carol on the radio on December 26, we know and believe that glory of the Resurrection can not be contained in a 24 hour period!

We live in a culture that puts more emphasis on anticipating holidays than celebrating them. Just think of those Christmas shopping displays that now appear in early October. It seems that the preparations for an event like Christmas or Easter far outpace the event itself.



The Church teaches us that Easter is not a day, but an entire season, lasting 50 days. In a symbol as subtle as numbers, we see that the 50 days of celebration for Easter outdoes the 40 days spent in Lenten preparation.

“The fifty days from Easter Sunday to Pentecost are celebrated in joyful exultation as one feast day, or better as one ‘great Sunday.’ These above all others are the days for the singing of the Alleluia.” (General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar, # 22)

So Easter is at once 50 days and one day. Why 50? Just as the date for celebrating Easter Sunday is tied to the ancient timing of the Jewish feast of Passover, so the timing of Pentecost comes from a Jewish festival called the Feast of Weeks, calculated as 50 days from the start of Passover and celebrating the first fruits, or gifts, of the early spring harvest. The word Pentecost is Greek for “the fiftieth” and since the third century has celebrated the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

But why call these weeks one day? Jesuit Fr. Bruce Merrill points once again to the symbolism. He explains that on the evening of the resurrection, the risen Christ breathes the gift of the Holy Spirit into his disciples (John 20: 22) and on the fiftieth day, the Pentecost, Luke describes the gift of the Holy Spirit descending on the disciples (Acts 2: 1-4). Therefore, we connect the life in the Spirit with the new life of the risen Christ. (from *“A Joyous Work: the 50 Days from Easter Sunday to Pentecost”* by Bruce T. Merrill, S.J.)

Throughout the Easter season, the first reading from each Sunday mass is taken from the Acts of the Apostles. The Liturgy of the Word shows us that God’s raising Jesus from the dead in the power of the Spirit and the gift of the Spirit of the Risen Christ to the church are one and the same event. Alleluia!

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