



ST. JOHN PAUL II LITURGICAL CENTER UPDATE

This year the month of March ends with Holy Week, which is the most solemn of all weeks of the Liturgical Year, because it commemorates the final days of Our Lord's life. It opens with Palm Sunday, Jesus' final entrance into Jerusalem. The three days from the evening of Holy Thursday to the evening of Easter Sunday are referred to by different names as the Easter Triduum or Paschal Triduum. The word "triduum" comes from Latin and means "three days." These three-days are considered one great festival, a summit of the Liturgical Year and the culmination of the Paschal Mystery is Jesus' Resurrection, "therefore Easter is not simply one feast among others, but the 'Feast of feasts,' the 'Solemnity of solemnities.'" (*The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1169).

For St. John Paul II, the mystery of redemption celebrated in the Paschal Mystery was one of his core teachings and therefore his first Encyclical Letter was *Redemptor Hominis* published on March 4, 1979. Let us read the first paragraphs below.

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IN THE WORDS OF ST. JOHN PAUL II:

THE REDEEMER OF MAN, Jesus Christ, is the centre of the universe and of history. To him go my thoughts and my heart in this solemn moment of the world that the Church and the whole family of present-day humanity are now living. In fact, this time, in which God in his hidden design has entrusted to me, after my beloved Predecessor John Paul I, the universal service connected with the Chair of Saint Peter in Rome, is already very close to the year 2000. At this moment it is difficult to say what mark that year will leave on the face of human history or what it will bring to each people, nation, country and continent, in spite of the efforts already being made to foresee some events. For the Church, the People of God spread, although unevenly, to the most distant limits of the earth, it will be the year of a great Jubilee. We are already approaching that date, which, without prejudice to all the corrections imposed by chronological exactitude, will recall and reawaken in us in a special way our awareness of the key truth of faith which Saint John expressed at the beginning of his Gospel: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14), and elsewhere: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16).

We also are in a certain way in a season of a new Advent, a season of expectation: "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son..." (Heb 1:1-2), by the Son, his Word, who became man and was born of the Virgin Mary. This act of redemption marked the high point of the history of man within God's loving plan. God entered the history of humanity and, as a man, became an actor in that history, one of the thousands of millions of human beings but at the same time Unique! Through the Incarnation God gave human life the dimension that he intended man to have from his first beginning; he has granted that dimension definitively-in the way that is peculiar to him alone, in keeping with his eternal love and mercy, with the full freedom of God-and he has granted it also with the bounty that enables us, in considering the original sin and the whole history of the sins of humanity, and in considering the errors of the human intellect, will and heart, to repeat with amazement the words of the Sacred Liturgy: "O happy fault... which gained us so great a Redeemer!" (Exsultet at the Easter Vigil)

