



Easter 2025

Dear parishioners and friends of St. Mary's,

The past few months since Christmas have flown by with dramatic events in our nation and in the Catholic Church (a new administration, illness, and hospitalization of Pope Francis, etc.).

For many people Christmas is the most important holiday of the year. And yet it is important to remember that Christmas is for the sake of Easter. The birth of the Lord makes possible what is truly the central celebration of the liturgical year, namely the paschal mystery of the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus which constitutes the foundation of our Christian faith.

Within the context of the struggles and challenges of contemporary events we are called to understand more deeply the significance of the paschal mystery through two of its most profound aspects which are known by the Greek terms of kenosis and theosis.

In Christian theology, kenosis refers to the "self-emptying" of Jesus in his Incarnation, especially in his suffering and death on the Cross. The humility and sacrificial love of Jesus is beautifully described by St. Paul: "though he was in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at, rather he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant" (Philippians 2:7). The central concept of kenosis is that while remaining fully God, Jesus voluntarily limits certain aspects/expressions of his divinity in order to fully share in our humanity for the sake of our redemption. "He pardons all our iniquities, he heals all our wounds" (Psalm 103:3). In other words, the kenosis of Jesus makes possible our salvation and sanctification.

This leads us to the second Greek term which is theosis. In classical Christianity, theosis is the whole point of creation; it is the meaning, purpose, and goal of human existence. Wow!!! That's quite a statement. Theosis, also called deification or divinization, refers to the belief that God became human in order that humanity might share, or participate in, the life of God. We become, solely by God's grace, "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4).

Through the Cross comes the resurrection at Easter. Despite the sufferings and struggles of this world, our souls and bodies are destined to fully share in the light, glory, and triumph of the risen Lord. In other words, his kenosis makes possible our theosis. This is the central proclamation of the gospel at Easter and throughout the whole year. I pray that this good news may lift up your hearts and bring you new strength, comfort, and peace.

Happy Easter!

Father Kevin Kennedy