Those with a missalette in hand will note that our Gospel today comes from Mark. Matthew, Mark and Luke are the look-alike Gospels. Annually, on this Palm Sunday, we proclaim the Passion according to these evangelists. As a teacher let me explain that the Good Friday Passion always comes from the other evangelist John. The Church was inspired to accept as Revelation the four Gospels although John differs from the others. Mark’s Gospel according to some scholars reads like a modern-day police report of a crime – just the facts. What Mark with Matthew and Luke share is a Passion account that offers some glimpses of the humanity of Jesus.

He expresses sorrow, anxiety and gives himself a plea to be relieved of death. John on the other hand depicts Jesus as in control of the entire drama. Like the puppeteer, he manipulates by hand the strings of the puppet. I mean that all the so-called authorities in the Passion are powerless in the face of Jesus who permits them to accuse him, try him, convict him, crucify him and kill him. For this reason, the church represents the Passion not once but twice in Holy Week to grasp the mystery of the humanity and divinity of Christ.

We take for granted that Jesus died on the cross. Twice the crowd expected Jesus to be saved. “Let him save himself,” some cried. Jesus ignored the plea. “Let Elijah the prophet return now and save him.” Jesus ignored the plea. Why did Jesus participate in death on a cross?

If we consider the Last Supper, we will see why Jesus ignored the plea and allowed the crucifixion to claim his life on earth. What Jesus did at the Last Supper was not remarkable. He simply repeated what his own people had done for centuries taking bread and blessing and sharing it. No what is dramatic and revolutionary and a break with tradition was what he said. Jesus offers himself for the salvation of the world. His sacrifice to come on the cross makes a new covenant between God and humankind.

What covenant does this replace, you might ask? The motive behind the Passover was to recall God’s marvelous work in rescuing his people enslaved in Egypt. This salvation took place by means of the sacrifice of lambs. Their blood was sprinkled on the door jams for the killer angel to see and pass over the homes of the Israelites. Homes without blood were subject to God’s punishment. So fierce was that punishment of death that the Pharoah released his slaves until he changed his mind and set out to capture them. The Lord again saved his people by letting them cross the Sea of Reeds on dry land but ambushed the Egyptians in deep water and destroying the army of Pharoah. God made a covenant with Moses to always remember this event. When the Temple was built by King Solomon sacrifices of lambs were offered for the sins of the people.

Jesus renovated this Passover meal by his words. He made himself the sacrifice, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Around Jesus we have a Temple not made of human hands but the temple of God’s only son. On the altar table we celebrate the sacrifice on the Lord’s day of resurrection. As we see then, the events of the Last Supper, the crucifixion and the resurrection are all related. Every year during Holy Week we remember them over the course of three days. The Sacred Triduum. Let us not overlook Holy Saturday which is the day of Jesus lying in the tomb. There is not activity on this day in church. It is fitting that as God rested on the sabbath from all the works of the six days, so Jesus would rest in the tomb till he rose on the first day of the week.

For Christians, the passion carries no meaning without the resurrection. If Jesus is not risen our sins are not yet forgiven and we are not capable of eternal life. For good reason then after sunset on Holy Saturday, we enter a darkened church to recall the tomb. Suddenly the Easter Candle is lit, the lights of the Church are turned on and the Exsultet is sung, a hymn of praise for Jesus the Light of Christ. He is risen and Easter Sunday has begun