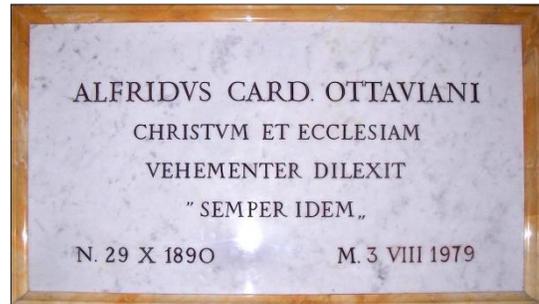


“IF IT AIN’T BROKE, DON’T FIX IT!”: CHANGE AND THE LITURGY OF HOLY WEEK

Semper idem– “Always the Same.” Such was the unusual **episcopal motto** of Alfredo Cardinal Ottaviani, a key figure at the time of the Second Vatican Council. As secretary of the Congregation of the **Holy Office** (known as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith since 1965), Ottaviani was a staunch preserver, a conservator of tradition. He was brilliant, though clearly **not** an innovator. In life as in theology, we need both **conservers** and **innovators**. This is what keeps the Church alive and fresh, while also remaining **solidly rooted** in our Catholic faith. History shows it’s a most **delicate** balance. With respect to daily Church operations, I’m clearly in the **camp** of innovators. I desire a leaner and **more efficient** ecclesial bureaucracy, both in the Curia as well as the Archdiocese. But when it comes to doctrine and liturgy (especially in Holy Week), I am arguably a preserver. **Slow down** and consider any changes carefully, with a nod to history and tradition.



Among the principal reasons why I look forward to Holy Week is that it **doesn't** change. It is one of the few weeks during the year that I can bank on! Most clergy **clear** their **schedules** of everything extraneous. A day off? As native “Gotham” denizens would say– fuggedaboutit! Not this week. But that’s okay because the **paschal mystery** occupies a central place in the life of the Church. When MLB’s opening day fell on Good Friday in 1998, the late Cardinal O’Connor wrote a piece for the Archdiocesan paper in New York: “I believe that playing on Good Friday, at the very least from 12 to 3, is cheap and **cheapens** our culture, no matter how big the box-office receipts. It’s cheap and it’s cheapening. I resent it. I protest it. I will not go to a game in 1998. Next year, I’ll see.” In generations past, that never would have happened. My goodness, even the nation’s **stock market** closes on Good Friday! MLB– get with the program!

Inclement weather postponed this year’s **Twins home opener** by a day. Due to scheduling issues, I had to give my ticket away. Even still, it would have felt **strange** to “celebrate” baseball on a **Lenten Friday**! Ideally this is **the week** when anything that **can be** put off is in fact set aside, to focus solely on the Cross of Christ. While it too often feels as if we are losing the **battle** on these issues, I hope that your experience of Holy Week has **reinvigorated** your faith. If we only realize that so much in life can wait a week. In many ways, Lent is a marathon, and Holy Week especially so. The plate is full, yet after more than 30 years, it has **never gotten old**. Holy Week has its own unique rhythm and when we commit to entering into this special week, the spiritual rewards will be palpable. Easter renews hope in humanity, redeemed by the blood of the Cross and made new in the light of **Christ’s triumph** over sin and death.

The past two Easters have been unusual to say the least– truly **surreal** in 2020. We yearn for normalcy, and it finally feels like we are back to normal. Perhaps not entirely back to normal, but close enough! Life goes on and as scripture reminds us, “There is no fear in love, but **perfect love** drives out **fear** because fear has to do with punishment, and so one who fears is not yet perfect in love.” (1 John 4:18) We face the fears of life in the light and knowledge of **newness of life** promised by Jesus. The world **desperately** needs the power of Christ’s resurrection. The **Ukrainian** people have endured a most horrific Lent. Fallen human nature doesn’t change; it is naïve to think that

wars will forever be eliminated. Yet, we fervently hope that humanity will discover the path to peace.

I wish to thank all who have helped to make possible our beautiful Holy Week liturgies. It truly takes a bevy of volunteers to make everything work well. I'll be honest— we **need more volunteers** and I ask your **prayerful consideration** of stepping up to help. I would especially welcome more women and men stepping up to volunteer – including young adults— to assist as lectors and in distributing Holy Communion at Mass. We need more **ushers** to welcome our visitors, while also maintaining the proper decorum and keeping alert from a security perspective, so that all feel safe and welcome here. The Cathedral truly shines during Holy Week! The liturgies touch our souls, even those whose practice is not as regular as it could (or should) be. It provides us the needed solace to move ahead in hope.

Honestly, I simply want Holy Week to stay the same— musically, liturgically, spiritually. There is an idiom—‘If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.’ Of uncertain origin (most likely from the southern U.S.), the idiom was popularized in the mid-1970’s by **T. Bert Lance**, President Jimmy Carter’s director of the Office of Management and Budget. He explained, “That’s the trouble with government: Fixing things that aren’t broken and not fixing things that are broken.” Could one not hold a similar view about the Church? The only thing about Holy Week that changes is the date of Easter! And **even that** (i.e. a **fixed date** about which I **wrote in 2015**) is worthy of discussion. Thank you for being here today—He is risen! Blessed Easter to all.

- Scientists at **Voyageurs National Park** released what is possibly the first ever video featuring a “day in the life of a wolf.” By attaching a “go-pro” like camera to a collar, they compiled a **25-minute “highlight” video**. I’m guessing they did not have the animal’s permission! But we **learned** that he loves blueberries, is a pretty decent fisherman and enjoys naps as much as we do!
- Speaking of animals...the tale of the “U.S. Capitol” fox in Washington D.C. had a very **different** ending than did our “Cathedral” fox. The D.C. vixen bit a CA Congressman on the ankle, along with **eight others**! Sadly, once caught, she tested positive for rabies and had to be euthanized. I’ll admit my bias, but I **can’t imagine** the Cathedral fox ever doing such a thing—Democrat or Republican!
- The 2021 report of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China details scores of **human rights** violations. Of the Church, it notes: “Authorities also continued either to demolish church buildings or to “sinicize” them by removing crosses and other religious symbols...” And on the 2018 Vatican-China pact: “In spite of the agreement, the contents of which remain secret, authorities subjected unregistered (“underground”) clergy to detention, **surveillance** and **removal** from active ministry pressure to sign an agreement with the government.”
- Our **Divine Mercy** program takes place next Sunday at **2:00 p.m.** It will include readings, time for Adoration, confessions and the praying of the Chaplet of Divine mercy. I hope you can join us.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,
Rector