

New mom seeks Holy Week advice

I absolutely adore Holy Week. Since I know I'm among friends, chances are that you do, too. I started thinking recently though, with a bit of panic, just what Holy Week means in terms of personal time spent inside a church.

First there's the Chrism Mass, where the holy oils are blessed for use throughout the diocese for the next year and where priests celebrate a renewal of their vows.

Then there's the Triduum itself: the Mass of the Lord's Supper, Good Friday of the Lord's Passion and either the Easter Vigil or Mass on Easter Sunday. Or sometimes – most of the time? – both. Then there's the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday, and definitely some quiet time between those sacred hours of noon and 3 p.m. Oh, and of course, confession. I told you I love Holy Week.

So why, might you wonder, am I going through this list, calculating time that I have, in the past, dedicated to peace, quiet and prayer during Holy Week? Because, dear reader, I have been slowly coming to grips with the fact that the peace, quiet and prayer of my beloved Holy Week is something of the not-so-long-ago, yet decidedly finished, past. This is because, as so many of you can well understand, I am the mother of a very squirmy, very opinionated (already!) 10-month-old.

Don't get me wrong, my not-so-little bundle of joy is actually very good during Mass. We sit in the second row each Sunday, and he watches the liturgy like the small, full-time observer he is. This past Sunday, even when he was facing me (and the back of the church), he still managed to bend over backward, literally, to keep tabs on what was happening on the altar. He

loves the readings, the responsorial psalm and the homily, which happens right in front of him. He follows the processions and the collection baskets closely. We usually can make it through an entire liturgy without having to bail to the back ... usually.

But the many, and the long, events of Holy Week will be another story, and asking Joseph to sit still for hours at a time, when all the little peanut wants to do is practice standing up and flopping down again likely is another story.

So I have begun to try to change my mindset. To reconfigure in my head how Holy Week – especially the Triduum – might work. What can I do from home? When should we spring for child care? At what point should my husband and I divide and conquer? What new traditions can we embrace even as old ones – even if only for the short-term – become less feasible?

So I'm reaching out to you, mamas and grandmas, daddys and grandpas, who have "been there, done that." How have you handled these liturgies? How have you managed to maintain a meaningful Holy Week while also adapting to changing realities? Email me – I'd love to hear your experience. And I wish you all a very blessed – and peaceful as can be! – Holy Week.