



Palm Sunday

Holy Thursday

Good Friday

Vigil

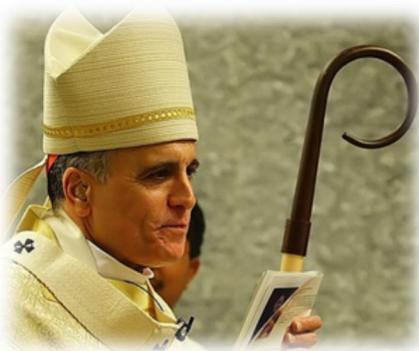
Easter

Triduum

Holy Week

The Triduum– Holy Thursday

Lent ends on the evening of Holy Thursday with the celebration of the liturgy called, *Holy Thursday, Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper*. On the morning of Holy Thursday the Chrism Mass is celebrated by the bishop of each diocese. For pastoral reasons it may be celebrated on a day prior to Holy Thursday. In the Chrism Mass the bishop, concelebrating Mass with the priests in his diocese, blesses oils and consecrates the oil mixed with chrism. The blessing of the oils is an ancient tradition dating back to Hippolytus and the *Apostolic Tradition* of the third century. Two oils are blessed: oil of catechumens and oil of the infirmed; one oil is consecrated: Sacred Chrism.



The Triduum– Holy Thursday

The Easter Triduum is the “mother of all feasts”. All other feasts of the liturgical year hinge on this great feast. The Triduum, which means, “three days”, is the word designated for the celebration of the Lord’s paschal mystery that spans three days; it is one great liturgy that lasts three days. There is no formal closing to the Holy Thursday or Good Friday liturgies as each is a continuation of the previous one until the liturgy culminates with the Easter Vigil. The Triduum begins with the Mass of the Lord’s Supper, continues with the celebration of the Lord’s Passion on Good Friday, culminates with the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday, and ends on Easter Sunday at sundown.

The Thursday evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper begins the Triduum and has joyful overtones. Bells ring, white or gold vestments worn, and flowers may adorn the sanctuary. The *Gloria*, not prayed since Ash Wednesday, returns for this brief moment. The tabernacle is empty so that all might receive the Eucharist from hosts consecrated in this Mass.

The Holy Thursday liturgy commemorates the Last Supper and is a living memorial of the institution of the Eucharist. In the Last Supper Jesus gave us the sacramental signs of his new covenant. In this new covenant, Jesus promised to be with us through the signs he inaugurated; bread and wine. These were not the only signs he gave. In John’s Gospel, which is proclaimed in this liturgy, there is no Eucharist of bread and wine. John’s Eucharist *is* the washing of feet. The implication? Go, and do likewise: “I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.” John 13:15

Through the *mandatum*, the washing of feet, Jesus conveys the self-sacrificing nature of his love. Jesus, servant of the human race, loves us to his death. Jesus, servant of all, washes the feet of those he serves and instructs (mandates/*mandatum*) his disciples to go and do the same.





The Holy Thursday liturgy has included a ceremonial washing of feet since the fifth century. This ritual imitates Jesus' Last Supper action of humility and service.

At the end of the Holy Thursday liturgy, consecrated hosts are carried in procession, preceded and followed by incense, and accompanied by song, to a chapel of repose for adoration.

After placing the hosts in the tabernacle set on the altar of repose, an atmosphere of quiet watching with the Lord begins. It is common for people to spend a Holy Hour until midnight.



We slowly shift into part two of our three-day liturgy as part one quietly fades into the meditative silence of darkness. The liturgy of Holy Thursday draws to its temporary intermission, and the Church enters into the silence of meditation as she sets her face toward Jerusalem and the ominous events that will forever change the world.

Good Friday

The second day of the Triduum is the Passion of the Lord, known as Good Friday, the commemoration of the death of Jesus on the cross outside the walls of Jerusalem. On this one day of the entire year, Mass is not celebrated.

The liturgy of Good Friday begins in silent prayer. There are three parts: 1) the Liturgy of the Word, with John's account of the Passion followed by the general intercessions, 2) veneration of the cross, and 3) communion using hosts consecrated in the Holy Thursday liturgy.

Jesus is the messianic fulfillment prefigured by the Law and the Prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures. The redemptive act of the cross was the fulfillment of all the saving acts of God prior to the Incarnation. In John's Gospel, Jesus says: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself". (12:32)

The Church wants us to relive the Passion of Christ on Good Friday. In chapter 12 of John's Gospel, just before Passover, Jesus announces his death, but also his glorification through and by means of his death; "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (12:23-24).

The announcement during the Supper of Judas's betrayal links the Supper to the sacrifice of the Cross. The successive moments

in which Christ hands himself over as food and is handed over to death belong together. When Judas eats the morsel and then goes out into the night, Jesus says, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and in him God is glorified; if God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and glorify him at once". (13:31-32). Thus, even at the very moment when the betrayal is assured and the Passion is imminent, Jesus speaks of his glorification. The hour of death is the hour of triumph.



After having listened to the account of Christ's victorious death, the Church now recollects herself for prayer, specifically through ten intercessions, the Prayers of the Faithful. They remind us of the concerns that should be ours as we recall the enduring fruits of Christ's Passion. We pray for the Church, for the Pope, for the clergy and laity, for catechumens, for the unity of Christians, for the Jews, for those who do not believe in Jesus, for those who do not believe in God, for those in public office, and for all men and women in their special needs.

It is heartening to realize that at the moment when the Church is celebrating the paschal mystery, she does not lose interest in any individual but, on the contrary, seeks to bring into her celebration all things spiritual and human, all the situations we find ourselves in, all our anxieties, all our divergent viewpoints.

The veneration of the Cross follows the Prayers of the Faithful. The triumphant Cross is the source of all Christian meaning; the Cross, which this world regards as foolishness, is what distinguishes the Christian from unbelievers.

The veneration of the cross reminds us of the good news inherent in the cross:



this instrument of torture became an instrument and sign of salvation and love for all humanity. We venerate the cross because of the person it bears and the love it conveys; the life it promises.



Following the veneration of the Cross the reserved hosts are brought to the altar. The priest invites us to pray the Lord's Prayer. The words, "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" take on a special depth of meaning after just having heard the Passion proclaimed; in which we heard Jesus bowing to the will he had come to do and obeying it with a love that would bring exultation.

The faithful then receive and celebrate Holy Communion. Afterwards and before leaving in silence, the priest prays: " May abundant blessing, O Lord, we pray, descend upon your people, who have honored the Death of your Son in the hope of their resurrection: may pardon come, comfort be given, holy faith increase, and everlasting redemption be made secure. Through Christ our Lord". Amen.

And all, after genuflecting to the Cross, depart in silence. The altar is stripped,; the sanctuary left bare.



The Church stands hopeful as she anticipates the Passover of the Lord.

Holy Saturday

The daytime hours of Holy Saturday continue the atmosphere of Good Friday, and have been observed as a time of quiet and fasting from the earliest centuries. However, there is an atmosphere of anticipation for the coming of night and the celebration of Jesus' resurrection. Adults preparing for Baptism or reception into the Church in the Easter Vigil celebration are especially observing quiet and reflective time, fasting and praying.

Easter Vigil

The Easter Vigil on the evening of Holy Saturday is the night of all nights and the primary celebration of Jesus's resurrection. The elaborate and beautiful rituals of the Vigil call for extensive preparation by many. The Church is decorated; sacramentals of oil, incense, water, and fire are readied; the liturgy is rehearsed. Adult Elect and Candidates begin their final hours of preparation.

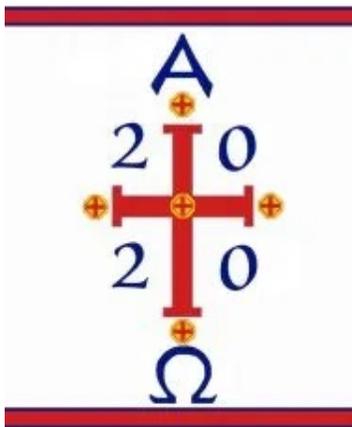


The Easter Vigil has four clearly defined parts: the Service of Light, the Liturgy of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments of Initiation, and the Eucharist.

The Service of Light begins with a darkened Church. The Presider and other celebrants begin outside striking the Paschal flame and lighting the Paschal Candle.



The Paschal Candle is inscribed and adorned with the traditional symbols.



Christ yesterday and today
The Beginning and the End
The Alpha
And the Omega
All time belongs to him
And all ages
To him be glory and power
Through every age and forever. Amen

The Paschal Candle

The Paschal Candle is lit during the Easter Vigil and symbolizes the light of Christ banishing darkness and death. It is lit every day through Ascension Day. The Greek letter alpha and omega, signify that God is the beginning and the end. The current year represents God in the present amidst the congregation. Five grains of incense are embedded in the candle during the Vigil to represent the five wounds of Jesus.

While inserting each of the 5 grains of incense the following is prayed:

1. By his holy
2. and glorious wounds,
3. may Christ the Lord
4. guard us
5. and protect us. Amen

Once the paschal candle is lit, its flame is used to light small candles held by those in attendance. The Paschal candle is processed to the sanctuary during which *Lumen Christi* ("light of Christ") is chanted by the one carrying the Paschal candle to which the assembly responds, "Thanks be to God."



Following the arrival of the procession to the sanctuary the *Exsultet*, a recounting of the saving actions of Christ, is sung, without musical accompaniment. Then the scriptural readings of the Mass, several from the Old Testament, are interspersed with responsorial Psalms and prayers by the celebrant. The Liturgy of the Word is far lengthier than in any other Mass of the Church's liturgical year, consisting of as many as seven readings which recapitulate God's saving action throughout history. After the last reading from the Old Testament with its Responsorial Psalm and its prayer, the Priest intones the hymn, *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, which is taken up by all. Suddenly all lights are turned on, candles are lit, and the *Gloria* is sung with the maximum amount of musical instruments, bells, and choir, available to the parish. The reading from the New Testament is followed by the proclamation of the Gospel and the homily.

The celebration of Baptism of the Elect begins, followed by the Rite to receive already-baptized Candidates into full communion with the Catholic Church. The celebration of Confirmation is then celebrated. The Liturgy of the Eucharist proceeds. The newly baptized and received now approach the table of the Eucharist for their First Holy Communion.

Easter



The day has dawned at last, the day of days. The Easter day liturgies continue the triumphant joy of the Easter Vigil. They remember and celebrate the very foundation of Christianity: Jesus is raised from the dead; Jesus is Lord. This is so great a celebration that it will continue for the next fifty days of the Easter Season which will conclude with Pentecost Sunday.

As the celebrant enters the Church to celebrate the Mass of Easter Day, he reminds all both of baptism and the blood of the covenant by sprinkling those present with holy water.



The great news is proclaimed once again in the entrance antiphon but this time it is Christ himself who proclaims it through the mouths of his faithful: "I have risen, and I am with you still, alleluia. You have laid your hand upon me, alleluia. Too wonderful for me, this knowledge, alleluia, alleluia".

Very often the neophytes, the newly baptized and received, return on Easter Sunday and take their place as fully initiated, candle carrying members of the assembly. The neophytes themselves are an Easter symbol for the community: a symbol of new, resurrected life in our midst.

The discovery of the empty tomb took place on the first day of the week. Here we have the reason for the celebration of Sunday. The Jews celebrated Saturday because that was the day on which God rested after his six days' work of creation. The Lord rose "early in the morning" on the first day of the new week, and that is the day Christians would henceforth celebrate. It would be for them, however, not only the first day of the week but also the eighth day, a day that falls outside, beyond, the system of the week. For it is not only the day on which God began the work of the first creation but also the day of the new creation and the resurrection from the dead. The early Church thought of it as first and foremost the day on which the whole of creation was renewed.

The first eight days after Easter are called the octave of Easter. The liturgical calendar designates each day a Solemnity of the Lord. The observance of the octave dates back to the mid-third to fourth century. Observance of the octave was a universal practice of the Church. During this week the faithful attended daily liturgy and refrained from work. At one time the octave was referred to as "white week" because the neophytes wore their white baptismal garments to Mass.

Our Lord wanted his followers to share in his passage to glory. With his Passion imminent, he prayed to his Father not only for his apostles and disciples but for the entire Church: "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us..." (John 17:20-21).

May we walk in unity with the peace of Christ—
everyday!

Alleluia, alleluia.

