

Holy Week

March 31, 2014



Jesus' Journey to Golgotha

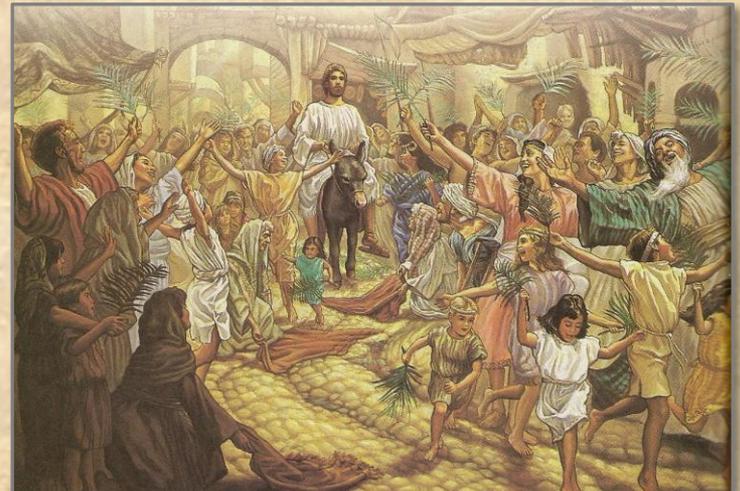
- Offers proof of His Divinity during a winter visit to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Dedication. (John 10)
- Jesus goes to Perea, where he was summoned to Bethany. There he raised Lazarus from the dead, a miracle which wins Him such renown among certain Pharisees that they decided finally to end His life.
- Jesus took refuge at Ephrem returning six days before Passover to Bethany, triumphantly entering Jerusalem.
- That evening, He leaves Jerusalem and returns Monday.
- He spent time with Gentiles in the Temple, and on Wednesday left for the Mount of Olives. Here he tells the apostles about the events of the next several days, including His impending death.
- He returned to Jerusalem on Thursday, to share the Last Supper with His apostles.
- He was subsequently arrested and tried and was crucified at Calvary on Friday, outside the gates of Jerusalem.



By this time, many of the important Jewish leaders are filled with hate for Jesus - they want to see him stoned, calling Him a blasphemer, especially after the Feast of the Dedication and raising Lazarus from the dead.

Holy Week

- Definition: The week preceding Easter – it is the final week of Lent.
- When does Lent end?
 - From the ‘40-Day’ perspective, it ends on Holy Saturday (day before Easter Sunday), which is the 46th day since Ash Wednesday
 - Liturgically, Lent ends two days earlier, on Holy Thursday (just before the Mass of the Lord’s Supper)
- During Holy Week, we commemorate the Passion of Christ, who died on Good Friday in reparation for the sins of mankind, and who rose on Easter Sunday to give new life to all who believe
- Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday
- Holy Week includes the Easter Triduum
 - The three-day period from Thursday evening through Sunday evening – “high point” of the Church year
- Holy Week ends on Holy Saturday



Palm Sunday

- Is the Sunday before Easter Sunday and initiates the solemn beginning of Holy Week.
- Recalls the triumphant entry of Jesus, marked by adoring crowds – because of His miracles and fame - into Jerusalem. They greeted Jesus not as the spiritual Messiah who would take away the sins of the world, but as a potential political leader who would overthrow the Romans. Their shout "Hosanna" meant "save now." In a way , Palm Sunday heralds coming of the long-expected kingdom – although in a most unexpected way – accomplished by his death and resurrection.
- Liturgy includes dramatic readings from Sacred Scripture
 - Gospel at the Procession is Luke's account of Jesus' preparation and entry into Jerusalem
 - Old Testament reading is from Isaiah's 'Suffering Servant Song'
 - New Testament reading is from Paul's letter to the Philippians which carries the theme of Christ's obedience, generosity and humility in the face of great suffering, His divinity notwithstanding
 - Gospel is the story of Jesus' last meal with His disciples, His agony in the garden, followed by His betrayal, arrest, trial, abuse, crucifixion, death and burial
- Dark undercurrent of Palm Sunday is a warning that anyone can 'turn' on Jesus at any moment in spite of our devotion to Him.



Holy Thursday

- Holy Thursday celebrates:
 - The institution of the sacerdotal ('sacramental') priesthood
 - The institution of the Eucharist
- Two significant Masses are celebrated on Holy Thursday
 - Chrism Mass (Mass of the Holy Oils) – special Liturgy held in the Cathedral usually attended by as many priests of the diocese as can possibly attend, to celebrate institution of the priesthood and to serve as the Mass for blessing the Chrism Oil to be used in Baptism and Confirmation
 - Holy Thursday Mass – celebrated in the evening because Passover began at sundown – it is a Mass of joy with white vestments, flowers, the Gloria, bells:
 - In the washing of the feet, Christ points directly to the worth God ascribes to 'humility of service' and need for cleaning with water (baptism)
 - In the breaking of bread and offering of the cup, Christ provides the words of Consecration and institutes the new Passover meal, the Eucharist
 - In this gathering in Jerusalem, Christ provides additional instruction to His disciples during this Sacred Meal

Notes

- Sacerdotal: Relating to a doctrine that ascribes spiritual or supernatural powers to ordained priests.
- In His Last Supper, Christ, in celebration of the Passover Feast, offers himself as the Passover Victim – and every ordained priest to this day presents the same sacrifice.
- The Bishop may also wash the feet of 12 of his priests to symbolize Christ's washing of the feet of His Apostles, the first priests.
- Not only do we hear about Jesus washing the feet of His disciples, we also see and experience it as the Pastor of the parish community removes his vestments and takes water and towel in washing feet – a true example of the Great Commandment.
- In this we learn that the Eucharist is not an end to itself, rather, it is the means by which we express our own self-sacrifice in building up the unity of the parish and of the whole Body of Christ.
- John 13:12, 15
- 'Maundy Thursday' comes from the Latin, 'Mandatum' (commandment) referring to Jesus' words at the Last Supper in John 13:34: "I give you a new commandment: Love on another as I have loved you."

Holy Thursday

- The Liturgy of the Word includes:
 - From Exodus, recounting of God's instructions to the nation of Israel concerning the Passover Feast
 - From John's Gospel, narrative of events of the Last Supper
- This Evening Mass concludes with 'Transfer of the Blessed Sacrament'
 - Provides witness to the Church's esteem for the real presence Christ's Body in the consecrated host
 - In solemn procession, the Blessed Sacrament is carried to an 'Altar of Repose' where it will remain until the communion service on Good Friday
 - The Church will not celebrate Mass again until the aster Vigil proclaims the Resurrection
- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament during the night takes place in many parishes as people stay with the Lord as the disciples during His agony on the Mount of Olives before Judas' betrayal



Notes

- Two ancient customs:
 - The Mass usually begins with the Tabernacle completely empty.
 - The entire community gathers at this one Eucharistic celebration.

Strong Passover context – being saved by the blood of the sacrificed lamb, and being nourished by its flesh

- You will note there is no final blessing at this Mass.
- The sacred Hymn 'Pange Lingua' is also usually sung.
- After Mass, the Altar is stripped bare and crosses are removed or covered.
- Notice the Humeral veil

Good Friday

- Solemn commemoration of the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ
 - The Church is called to fix her gaze on the Cross at Cavalry and to understand the cost Christ paid to win our redemption
 - Considered the most sorrowful day in the history of the world – certainly the most sober day and liturgy of the entire year
 - Jesus offers His life for the redemption of the sins of the entire world
 - It is a day for fasting, reflection, prayer and submission before the Cross
- There is no Mass celebrated on Good Friday
 - The Church is in mourning – even the priestly vestments are red
 - church is stripped of its ornaments
 - altar is bare there are no candles
 - exposed crucifixes are covered
 - doors to the tabernacle stand open
 - Holy Water fonts have been drained

Good Friday

- A communion service is held: Celebration of the Passion of the Lord
 - Liturgy of the Word:
 - Isaiah 52-53: the mystery of the glorious cross & suffering servant is placed before us
 - Hebrews 4-5: The Great High Priest being perfected in His obedience to the Father
 - John 18-19: The events of Christ's Passion according to John
 - Intercessions:
 - Join the entire Church in the most solemn form of the General Intercessions
 - Veneration of the Cross
 - We approach the 'wood of victory' and reverence this instrument of torture, cruelty, suffering and death as the instrument of our gift of grace and salvation
 - accompanied by chanting/singing of 'The Reproaches'
 - Holy Communion: Blessed Sacrament using the Eucharist from Holy Thursday is taken from its position of repose to the altar and the Priest begins with the Lord's Prayer followed by distribution of the Body of Christ

Notes

- Jesus was given punishments reserved only for slaves and rebellious members of subjugated peoples – flagellation and crucifixion.
- These two penalties were not just about the pain, but about the humiliation.
- In first century Palestine, men and women typically covered themselves from head to toe, even in the scorching heat. A crucified man was stripped naked and put on display for all to see.
- On Good Friday and Holy Saturday, the Church does not celebrate the Sacraments at all, except for Penance and Anointing of the Sick.
- The cross may be left on the altar with several candlesticks.
- The omission of the prayer of consecration deepens our sense of loss because Mass throughout the year reminds us of the Lord's triumph over death – the source of our joy and blessing.
- The desolate quality of the rites of this day remind us of Christ's humiliation and suffering.
- Adoration or veneration of an image/representation of Christ's Cross does not mean that we are actually adoring the material image, rather, we call to mind and honor what it represents. What we are doing is paying the highest honor to our Lord's Cross as the instrument of our salvation.
- The Cross is inseparable from His sacrifice... we affirm the words of the Stations: "We adore thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee, because by Thy Holy Cross Thou has Redeemed the World."
- The 'Reproaches' are intended to make the people more deeply aware of how our sinfulness and hardness of heart cause such agony for our sinless and loving Savior.
- Note during Holy Week the Passion of the Lord is read three times: Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday.

Holy Saturday

- A day of solemn anticipation and prayerful waiting at the Tomb
- The sorrow of Good Friday is replaced by quiet hope
- No Mass appears in the normal liturgy for this day
 - The church remains bare
 - Administration of the Sacraments is limited
 - Not even a Communion service offered
- Liturgically-speaking, Holy Saturday lasts until 6 pm (or dusk)
- Then the Easter Vigil is celebrated

Notes

- The Second Adam had to undo the damage caused by the first.
- What was the sin our first parents? They disobeyed because they wanted to know what God knew, to be like God, to exalt themselves over God (Gen 3).
- They were bitten by the Serpent, and injected with the deadly venom of Pride.
- The antidote, the anti-venom could only be humility. The foot-washing, donkey-riding New Adam would crush the head of the deadly serpent by means of loving, humble obedience.
- Though the Divine Word was God, dwelling in the serene heights of heavenly glory, he freely plunged to the depths of human misery, joining himself to our frail nature, entering into our turbulent world. As if this act of humility were not enough, he further humbled himself, accepting the status of a slave.

Easter Vigil

- Marks the start of the Easter Season
 - It is the first Mass since Holy Thursday
 - It includes the Gloria which has been absent during Lent
 - Not even a Communion service offered
- Liturgically-speaking, Holy Saturday lasts until 6 pm (or dusk)
- Then the Easter Vigil Mass is celebrated – not as an ‘anticipated Mass’ to fulfill our Sunday obligation, but for what it is: a Vigil
- The vigil is divided into four parts:
 - 1) Service of Light,
 - 2) Liturgy of the Word,
 - 3) Liturgy of Baptism, and
 - 4) Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Notes

- Vigil – definition: a purposeful or watchful staying awake during the ordinary hours of sleep.
- It can be very difficult to follow the long and intricate Easter Vigil Mass – or profit spiritually from it – without devoting time beforehand to reading, contemplation and study.
- This is the point: we gather, we wait, we watch, we keep vigil – all with the candidates and catechumens in our midst.
- Not all readings are required to be read due to time constraints, but at least three Old Testament readings must be read, including Exodus 14.
- The readings are
 - 1) The story of creation, Gen 1:1-2; 2;
 - 2) Abraham and Isaac, Gen 22:1-18;
 - 3) Crossing of the Red Sea, Exodus 14:15–15:1;
 - 4) Isaiah 54:5-14;
 - 5) Isaiah 55:1-11;
 - 6) Baruch 3:9-15.32–4:4;
 - 7) Ezekiel 36:16-17.18-28;
 - 8) Romans 6:3-11 – Paul’s words comparing baptism, death, and resurrection into new life
 - 9) Gospel reading Mark 16:1-7.
- Gloria is accompanied by organ and bells.

Easter Vigil

- Service of Light
 - Atmosphere in the church is different: holy water fonts are drained, lights are out, tabernacle is empty
 - Even the service begins outside the church where a new fire is lit and blessed
 - The new Paschal candle is prepared for the year and then lit from the fire
 - As the Deacon processes in the Paschal candle, he announces ‘Christ is our Light’, the assembly responds ‘Thanks be to God’ and lights their candles
 - The glorious Easter song of the Catholic Church: the *Exsultet* is sung
- Liturgy of the Word
 - Nine readings, seven Old Testament and two New Testament, are provided
 - Readings are chosen to help us meditate on the wonderful works of God for his people since the beginning of time
 - A complimentary Responsorial Psalm and prayer follows each reading
 - The Gloria, sung for the first time since the beginning of Lent, precedes the New Testament reading from Romans and is followed by the Alleluia
 - Gospel is Luke’s account of the disciples finding the empty tomb (Chapter 24)

Easter Vigil

- Liturgy of Baptism
 - Priest and ministers go to the baptismal font
 - The Litany of the Saints is sung and the baptismal waters blessed
 - Those to be baptized, the catechumens, are presented by their sponsor and are questioned by the Priest
 - They receive the Sacrament of Christian Initiation: baptism and confirmation
 - Candidates who are to be received into the Church receive confirmation
 - The whole assembly then renews their baptismal promises and is sprinkled with blessed water
 - The church then presents the Universal Prayer
- Liturgy of the Eucharist
 - Includes participation of those catechumens and candidates newly received into the Catholic Church

And so... What is This All About

- His earthly beginning was frightfully humble - His earthly end would be no different: the wood of the manger prefigured the wood of the cross.
- From beginning to end, the details of His life are humiliating: No room in the inn. Born amidst the stench of a stable. Hunted by Herod's henchmen. Chased into a foreign country. Reared in a far-flung province of the Roman Empire - Galilee, the land where the country accent was so thick, you'd be identified just by speaking. Calling disciples who were far from the most cultured, learned men of the day.
- When one of His closest companions offered to betray him, He did not require millions. His worth was reckoned to be no more than the Old Testament "book value" for a slave - thirty pieces of silver (Ex 21;32).

And so... What is This All About

- When finally handed over to the Romans, He was not given the usual capital punishment meted out to Roman citizens. Instead, He was given punishments reserved only for slaves and rebellious members of subjugated peoples – flagellation and crucifixion – penalties not just about pain; rather more about the humiliation, stripped naked and put on display for all to see.
- But this is not primary a story of violence and humiliation. The events of Holy Week are much more about love and humility, sacrifice and obedience, charity and forgiveness, communion and salvation. They are the story of our Lord.

St. Therese of Lisieux Morning Prayer

O my God!

I offer Thee all my actions of this day for the intentions and for the glory of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I desire to sanctify every beat of my heart, my every thought, my simplest works, by uniting them to Its infinite merits; and I wish to make reparation for my sins by casting them into the furnace of Its Merciful Love.

O my God!

I ask of Thee for myself and for those whom I hold dear, the grace to fulfill perfectly Thy Holy Will, to accept for love of Thee the joys and sorrows of this passing life, so that we may one day be united together in heaven for all Eternity.

Amen.