

Holy Saturday

On this day, the body of Jesus lay in the guarded tomb and the frightened disciples hid behind locked doors. In the Church, Holy Saturday is a quiet day, the great Sabbath rest. The paschal fast continues and we avoid entertainments and distractions, as on Good Friday. During the day, the catechumens (elect) make their final preparations for baptism.

Easter

Easter vigil: This service is the most important celebration of the Church year. It takes place during the dark hours of the night. It has four distinct stages:

Light service. After the blessing of the new fire, the priest lights the Easter candle. This represents the risen Lord and is a visible reminder that Jesus is the light of the world.

Liturgy of the word. Nine readings from God's word lead us from creation through God's saving works to his greatest work, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. We listen with faith, reflect on the word and respond by singing psalms. The homily helps us to recognize God's mighty works in our midst.

Christian initiation. Our baptism into the death and rising of the Lord Jesus is at the centre of tonight's celebration (*Rom* 6.3-11). In each parish, water for baptism is solemnly blessed. Catechumens who have prepared over a long period of time now reject Satan, profess their faith in Christ and are baptized, confirmed, and nourished with their first Eucharist.

The rest of the people renew their baptismal promises and are sprinkled with blessed water in memory of their baptism. Tonight is celebrated as the baptismal anniversary of the whole Christian community.

Eucharist: The first Mass of Easter is celebrated with great splendour. We rejoice because Christ has been raised from the dead and because we are renewed in him. Once more we begin our task of sharing the good news of salvation with everyone we meet.

Easter day: The joyful celebration of our Lord's rising continues. *Alleluia!* meaning "praise to God!" is our shout of joy.

Easter season: For fifty days, the people of God reflect on the meaning of Jesus' resurrection and of their sharing in it through baptism: dying to sin and living for God. For seven weeks we celebrate the presence of Jesus among us. We celebrate his ascension and pray to him, seated in glory with the Father. As we prepare for Pentecost, we ask him to fill us with the grace and power of his Spirit.

In our home: Holy Week and the Easter season offer us an opportunity to share more fully with Jesus in his suffering and in his glory. Are we open to his love for us?

*Holy Father,
we praise you for loving us so deeply
that you sent Jesus to save us.
We remember his suffering,
his dying, and his rising.
With him we continue each day
to die to sin in our life
and to live only for you.*

*Heavenly Father,
we praise you
through Christ our Lord. Amen!*

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HOLY WEEK

Dying and rising with Jesus
We renew our lives with our Lord

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Holy Week

The action of this week moves from the triumph of the palm procession through the agony and death of the Lord to his glorious resurrection from the dead. During Holy Week, the people of God take time to reflect and pray about what Jesus has done for us in his love. We become more aware of the many ways in which we continue to live and experience the dying and rising of Jesus in our daily lives.

Passion Sunday

Palms. The blessing of palm branches and the procession remind us of Jesus' triumphant entrance into Jerusalem. We praise Christ our king: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Jesus comes to save us and the world by the Paschal mystery: his death and resurrection accomplishes our salvation.

Passion narrative. Quickly the mood of the celebration changes: the solemn reading of the passion account from Matthew, Mark or Luke reminds us of the purpose of Jesus' entrance into the Holy City. We have begun to follow him on the way of the cross, along the road that leads us to Calvary and to Easter.

At home. We place palms in our homes to show reverence for Jesus our leader: we are his followers in suffering as in glory.

Chrism Mass: On Thursday (or another day before Easter) the bishop blesses the oils in the cathedral. He blesses holy Chrism for baptism, confirmation and ordination; oil for the anointing of the sick; and the oil of catechumens for those preparing for baptism. The oils are brought to each parish church and there prominently and reverently displayed. They are used in celebrating the sacraments during the year.

Easter Triduum: For three full days, from Holy Thursday evening to Easter Sunday night, the Church celebrates the *Paschal mystery* of Jesus Christ. This is his work of saving us by his dying and rising: one great act of God's love and mercy for us. We celebrate because Jesus has brought us into his paschal mystery by baptism. With him we are baptized into death to sin; with him we rise to live a new life for God.

Holy Thursday

Evening Mass: We remember the Passover feast of the Jewish people and the Last Supper of Jesus with his disciples when we celebrate the Eucharist this evening. Before he offers himself on the cross, Jesus takes bread and says, "This is my body." He takes a cup of wine and says "This is my blood of the new covenant... shed to save all sinners. Do this in memory of me." We obey him each time we come together to celebrate the Eucharist.

Washing of the feet. At the Last Supper, Jesus washed his apostles' feet to give them an example of love and service. Its re-enactment is a reminder that all Christians are called to love and to serve others.

Communion under both forms. Jesus told us to remember him by eating and drinking. Tonight especially everyone is invited to eat the bread of life and drink the cup of salvation.

Procession. At the end of the Mass, the Eucharist for the Good Friday Communion celebration is carried reverently through the church and reserved in a place of honour.

Adoration. Until midnight, members of the community spend time in prayer and adoration, remembering the Lord Jesus, whose death and resurrection saves us.

Good Friday

Spirit of the day: The meaning of this day is clearly indicated by its name in English: it is "Good" Friday, the day when God did wonderful things for us by the suffering and death of his Son. Out of his death God has brought us light and life, making it possible for us to be saved. This is indeed a good day for the world.

Paschal fast: This morning we begin our two-day fast in preparation for the Easter vigil. We eat less food than normal and cut out entertainments. We wait until the Easter vigil to wear our spring finery. These are days for prayer and meditation, not for shopping or driving or being entertained: Friday and Saturday form a sort of mini-Lent, and are actually the origin of that season.

Liturgy: Around 3:00 o'clock, the time of our Lord's death on the cross, we come together in church to remember what Jesus has done for us. In the service of the word, we listen to the solemn proclamation of Jesus' passion according to John, then offer prayer for the world and for God's people, the Church.

We venerate the cross, and eat the life-giving Body of the Lord in Communion.

In our homes we keep the paschal fast all day. All members make an effort to observe silence and to spend more time in prayer.

If we do not have a cross in our family room and in each person's room, this would be a good day to put these crosses in place.

At other times during the day, we may go to a service at our parish church, or have a quiet family celebration of the way of the cross.

*Lord Jesus, we give you glory,
you are the Saviour of the world!*