

Journey of Faith



In Short:



- During Holy Week, we follow the events of Jesus' passion through his resurrection.
- Palm Sunday and the Easter Triduum mark the main events of Holy Week.
- Jesus entrusts us with sharing the good news of his resurrection with others.

After hearing this story from one of the Gospels, we take up our own palms and sing a hymn in honor of Christ our king as we process into the church. But the story isn't over. Later, we hear the story of the passion of Jesus. The same people who welcomed Jesus to Jerusalem ask for his crucifixion less than a week later. We reflect on the fickleness of human nature and our own weakness.

A Prayer of Welcoming

Read one of the Gospel accounts of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem: Matthew 21:1–11, Mark 11:1–10, or Luke 19:28–40.

Now imagine the scene as if you're there. Hear the sounds of the crowd. See the crowd around you, the palms on the path. Watch Jesus riding on the colt of an ass. Imagine you're laying down palms and welcoming Jesus. What else could you do to make Jesus feel honored, respected, and welcomed? We all long to feel welcomed and accepted. When we welcome others, God's welcome to us is passed on.

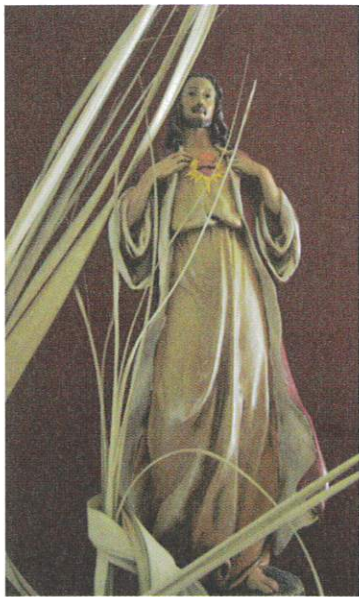
Remember an opportunity you had recently to welcome someone. It may have been someone who sat next to you in church, someone new at work, someone you just met.

The Meaning of Holy Week

During Holy Week, we enter into Christ's passion, death, and resurrection. We not only commemorate the important events of our salvation in a historical way but we also celebrate them in a sacramental way that makes these sacred mysteries present to us.

Palm Sunday

Holy Week begins on Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord, the Sunday before Easter. This liturgy recalls Jesus' dramatic arrival at Jerusalem. He came humbly, yet the people greeted him by laying cloaks and palm branches on his path and acclaiming him as the Son of David, and, therefore, heir to the kingdom.



- *What did you do to help this person feel welcomed and accepted?*



The Easter Triduum

Triduum means a “three-day festival.” The Easter Triduum is three days of prayer and worship beginning on Holy Thursday evening and ending with vespers (Evening Prayer) on Easter.

Holy Thursday

Holy Thursday is the feast day of the institution of the priesthood and of the Eucharist.

Chrism Mass. In the morning, in cathedrals around the world, priests and people gather with their bishops for the great chrism Mass. The priests renew their commitment to priestly service, and the people are asked to pray for them.

The three oils used in the Church are blessed by the bishops on Holy Thursday: the *oil of chrism* used in the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and holy orders; the *oil of catechumens* used in the baptism of children and with adults preparing for baptism; the *oil of the sick* used in the sacrament of the anointing of the sick.

The Mass of the Lord's Supper. The Triduum begins with the evening Mass, which celebrates the institution of the holy Eucharist. After the reading of Jesus' command to serve others as he has served, the celebrant washes the feet of twelve people, representing the twelve apostles whose feet Jesus washed at the Last Supper (see John 13:1–15). At the end of Mass, the priest takes the Blessed Sacrament from the main tabernacle to a separate altar of repose.

Model of Service

Read John 13:1–15. Imagine the scene as if you're there. Imagine Jesus washing your feet: Feel the water on your feet and the towel Jesus uses to dry them. Look at him, bent low in service. He looks up at you and your eyes meet. *How do you feel about Jesus washing your feet?*

Jesus says to you:

“If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.”

John 13:14–15

- How is God asking you to “wash feet” in your life?



Good Friday

The central act of worship on this day is the celebration of the passion of the Lord, which has three key parts:

1. **Liturgy of the Word:** We hear the story of the passion from John's Gospel and pray for the Church and the world.
2. **Adoration of the Cross:** We approach the cross with a sign of reverence for this symbol of our salvation, this sign of God's love for us. We reverence the cross because we adore Christ and we thank him for his perfect sacrifice on the cross.
3. **Holy Communion:** Good Friday is the only day in the Church year when Mass isn't offered, but holy Communion reserved from the Mass on Holy Thursday is distributed.

Through Christ's victory over the cross, he offers us everlasting life. During the Good Friday service, the celebrant reminds the assembly three times, “Behold the wood of the Cross, on which hung the salvation of the world” to which we respond, “Come, let us adore.”

A day of abstinence and fasting on which the altar is bare, crosses in the church are covered or removed, and the service ends in silence, Good Friday may be seen by some as dreary and uncomfortable, something to quickly pass over on the way to Easter. But Good Friday can't be skipped over. We must pass through Jesus' death and ponder what it means for us.

At the Foot of the Cross

Imagine standing at the foot of the cross. Take time to visualize Jesus' physical agony. Be aware of your feelings as you witness his sufferings. *What do you want to say to him?*

Listen as Jesus speaks his healing words of forgiveness: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Allow his forgiveness to touch you. Ask Jesus to help you see with his eyes and forgive others as he has forgiven you.

- Who do you still need to forgive? Picture yourself laying the burden of your anger and hurt at the foot of the cross.



Holy Saturday

During the day, the Church is silent, the altars are bare. The tabernacle is empty. We wait in silence at the tomb for the Lord's resurrection. We prepare for the Easter sacraments by prayer, reflection, and optional fasting.

After sunset, the Church explodes in joy and celebration of Jesus' resurrection. "This is the night when Christ broke the prison-bars of death," proclaims the Church in the Proclamation of Easter (*Exsultet*). And what a night it is! This is a night when the whole parish and Church come together.

Having attended the Good Friday service, we gather again for the Easter Vigil so that we may experience the complete message of our faith: the assurance that death and sin have been conquered.

The vigil begins at the door of the church where *new fire* is kindled. The priest blesses the new *paschal candle* and lights it from the Easter fire. He or a deacon holds the candle high and carries it into the darkened church, proclaiming "The Light of Christ" to which we respond, "Thanks be to God."

Gradually the light of Christ dispels the darkness. From the paschal candle, other candles are lit until the light fills the church.

The *Liturgy of the Word* leads us to reflect on God's faithful love throughout salvation history. Up to seven *Old Testament readings* are proclaimed, with *psalms* interspersed. We listen to the *epistle* from Romans in which St. Paul writes about our being buried with Jesus Christ "through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life" (6:4). We sing the "Alleluia" for the first time since Lent began. The *Gospel* and *homily* follow.

Catechumens are called forth for *baptism*. We pray a *Litany of the Saints*. The priest *blesses the water*. Adults and children are baptized, clothed in white garments, and given lighted candles. The assembly renews their baptismal vows.

Candidates for full communion make a *profession of faith*. They join the newly baptized for *confirmation* and later receive the *Eucharist* for the first time.

As with every Mass, we are *sent forth* to be Christ's body in the world. The Mass ends, but the journey of new Catholics has just begun.

Easter

Easter morning follows. New life and fresh hope have come in the risen Christ. We celebrate with a renewal of baptismal promises to reject sin and evil, love God, and follow Jesus.

Easter is such a significant feast that the celebration continues for fifty days. The joyful music, the elegance and fragrance of lilies, and life in Christ, new or renewed, continues until Pentecost...and beyond.





Read one of the Gospel accounts of Jesus' resurrection: Matthew 28:1–10; Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–12; or John 20:1–18.

Imagine you're weary and grief-stricken following Jesus' suffering and death. Now you see the empty tomb, the rock that's been rolled away, the wrappings, the angel. Hear the angel announce, "He is not here, for he has been raised just as he said.... Go quickly and tell his disciples" (Matthew 28:6–7).

This message is for us today, too. We are called to be messengers of the good news of Jesus Christ.

- *What good news can I share with others about this life of grace and mercy in following the Lord?*
- *How will I deliver the message in words, in actions, in prayer?*

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