

## A Message for Holy Week 2024

*Adorámus te, Christe, et benedícimus tibi.  
Quia per sanctam crucem tuam redemísti mundum.*

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

The week between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday, Holy Week, is the most sacred time of year for Catholic Christians. During this special time, we enter into the passion of Christ his crucifixion, death, and resurrection through liturgical celebration and personal conversion. While the season of Lent is a very important time in the Church, it is helpful to remember that our Lenten practices (prayer, fasting, and almsgiving) are meant as preparation for the three days of the Triduum.

Monday through Wednesday of Holy Week set the stage for the events of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. The Mass readings encompass the historical events that precede the Last Supper, but they also take us through various interior reflections in preparation for the Sacred Triduum.

Holy Thursday, the Mass of the Lord's Supper commemorates Jesus' institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper and the institution of the priesthood. Holy Thursday is also the beginning of the sacred Triduum. This is the night to thank God more than any other night for the gift of the Holy Eucharist, for the gift of the priesthood that makes the holy Eucharist possible, and for the way that the Lord did everything he needed to in order to give us all that he had, even washing our feet. The Holy Thursday liturgy concludes with the transfer of the Blessed Sacrament to an altar of repose, separate from the main altar and tabernacle with the procession to the altar of repose. The procession echoes the journey that Jesus and the apostles took to the Garden of Gethsemane after sharing the Passover meal.

The Good Friday service is a liturgy and not a Mass, it marks the time of Christ's death. The day's liturgy commemorates Christ's crucifixion and death and the Passion as told by Saint John is chanted or proclaimed. While not a Mass, Eucharistic hosts consecrated on Holy Thursday are distributed to the faithful, who also pray for Christian unity and that non-Christians may come to embrace the fullness of Christ's truth.

Holy Saturday (before sundown) is a solemn day as the faithful reflect on the mystery of Christ's descent into Sheol to free the dead. This is a real day of silence in which we ponder Jesus in the tomb and what Jesus is doing as his body lay in the tomb. As sundown arrives, the Church celebrates the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus in the Easter Vigil, the high point of the entire liturgical year. The Mass consists of the Service of Light, the Liturgy of the Word, The Liturgy of Baptism with Christian Initiation, Confirmation and the Renewal of Baptismal Promises, and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. It's an opportunity for us to welcome new brothers and sisters in the Faith. For us to be there to welcome new family members is such a beautiful witness to what the Church is. Likewise, we're able to receive the risen body of the Lord within us. That's the newness of life that is proclaimed that we don't just celebrate a fact, but we enter into a relationship with him who says "I am the resurrection and the life."

As we enter into Holy Week together as a faith community, let us pray and reflect on the profound journey of Jesus' suffering, sacrifice, and victory over death. Throughout this week, we must reflect on the emotional intensity of Jesus' Passion, contemplate His boundless love and mercy, and anticipate the joyous hope of His Resurrection. Let this week serve as a spiritual pilgrimage that deepens our faith.

So I invite you and encourage you to make this Holy Week a priority in your life. Encounter God as we take this journey together. We will pray. We will worship. We will be nourished by His Most Precious Body and Blood. We will marvel at what God has done for us even while we were yet estranged from Him. We will seek God's grace that we may follow Him more and more all the days of our lives. Please don't neglect such a wonderful opportunity and make use of these means to grow in your faith, to deepen your commitment, to draw closer to the one who is the Way and the Truth and the Life.

Blessings in Christ

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