

Many parishes offer Stations of the Cross on Good Friday. For more information on experiencing stations, visit www.osv.com.

Fasting is required on Good Friday. Catholics are to take in only one full meal (smaller than a regular meal, and often substituting fish for meat) in solemn remembrance of our hunger for Christ and his everlasting sacrifice on the Cross.

CONVERSION QUESTION: What crosses do I bear in my own life? Am I strong enough to carry my cross as Jesus did?



FAMILY ACTIVITY: Pray the Lord's Prayer at bedtime this night, in remembrance of Christ's gift for all of salvation.

Easter Vigil

Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, where no one had ever been laid . . . they laid Jesus there.

— Jn 19:41-42



The Easter Vigil is the restoration of the early Church's tradition as the great celebration of adult baptism and confirmation. It is the high point in the Church liturgical year. The Vigil begins in darkness (usually outside), and the long procession of candle-light that enlivens the church reminds us that Jesus is the light of the world who has conquered all darkness and death. The Paschal candle that is lit at the Easter Vigil will remain in the church throughout the year as a sign of Christ's death and resurrection.

Those who are coming into full communion with the Church receive the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil, and we, as the community of believers, participate in this initiation by renewing our own baptismal promises. We recommit ourselves to Christ by once again rejecting sin and accepting the freedom that



FAMILY ACTIVITY: Before attending the Vigil as a family, talk about the symbols that help make the liturgy so rich — fire, water, oil, darkness, light. What emotions do these symbols bring forth in us? What is the Church teaching us through the use of these signs and symbols?



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comes from living as children of God. We pray and welcome the newly initiated as they receive the oil of chrism and "share in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit" at confirmation. The white garments given to the newly initiated (and to us at our baptism) represent Christ's everlasting victory over death.

The Vigil concludes with reception of the Eucharist. As the newly confirmed receive the final Sacrament of Initiation, the Body and Blood of Jesus, we are ready to celebrate Easter. The tomb is empty. There is Light in the darkness. Alleluia, Christ has risen!

CONVERSION QUESTION: Do I take my baptism seriously? What are some ways I feel called to live up to fulfill my baptismal promises?

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Conclusion

The Triduum is the culmination of the entire liturgical year and the three most sacred days in the lives of Catholic Christians. The single celebration that comprises the Triduum commemorates the fullness of the Paschal mystery — the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus was willing to die for our sins and was resurrected, death is no longer the end of life for us. It is the beginning of new life. We gather together during Holy Week, then, to remember the saving act of Jesus, to celebrate the miracle of his resurrection, and to embrace his promise of eternal life.

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Holy Week

Simple Ways to Walk with Jesus





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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. The Second Vatican Council returned emphasis to the Triduum — Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Vigil/Easter Sunday — as the center of our faith.

Christ redeemed us all and gave perfect glory to God principally through his paschal mystery: dying he destroyed our death and rising he restored our life. **Therefore the Easter Triduum of the passion and resurrection of Christ is the culmination of the entire liturgical year.**

— *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar*, No. 18

The three days of the Triduum are counted as the Hebrews counted their days, from dusk to dusk. Lent officially ends and the Triduum begins at dusk on Holy Thursday and continues through dusk on Easter Sunday. Because we cannot separate Jesus' death from his resurrection, the Church teaches that the Triduum is really one celebration that lasts for three days. We do not spend all of the three days in church, of course, but at various times during these days we are called to gather together at church to celebrate and remember the saving action of Christ.

Five Ways to Celebrate Holy Week



1. Many parishes stay open day and night throughout the three days of the Triduum. Give yourself (and your family) the gift of quiet time for prayer and reflection in church early in the morning or late at night.

2. Meditate on the same passage from Scripture every day and listen for how God is calling you.

3. Move your crucifix to the front door (or the door you use most) as a remembrance of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.



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4. During Holy Week, turn off your car radio and pray silently.

5. Gather canned goods and extra food from your cupboards to donate to the local food shelf. Pray for all those people for whom fasting is not a choice.

Holy Thursday

When he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?"

— Jn 13:12



The evening Mass on Holy Thursday begins the sacred Triduum. On this night, we remember the Last Supper and celebrate the institution of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Holy Orders. At the end of the liturgy, the sanctuary is stripped clean in preparation for the most somber of feasts, Good Friday.

The spirituality of the Triduum is centered on the accounts of the Paschal mystery in the Gospel of

John. In John's Gospel, the Last Supper is not the Passover meal; rather, Jesus is crucified at the same time the lambs are being slaughtered for Passover, as a sign that he is the Lamb of God, sacrificed for all of humanity. The last meal Jesus shares with his apostles in the Gospel of John is marked by the washing of feet. Jesus gets down in the dirt and washes the feet of his disciples and in this way connects the Holy Eucharist with service to others.



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Most Holy Thursday liturgies include a modern-day experience of foot washing. This recalls Jesus washing the feet of his apostles and is a powerful example of how we are called to serve and care for one another. Holy Thursday is also referred to as Maundy Thursday, meaning "a new mandate." It refers to the mandate put forth by Jesus in John 13:34, "Love one another as I have loved you."

CONVERSION QUESTION: Do I take Christ's call to service seriously? What are some ways that I "wash the feet" of others in my daily life?

FAMILY ACTIVITY: Talk about how Jesus is really present in Holy Communion and how sharing in his body strengthens us to become the Body of Christ and follow him each day.



Good Friday

[Jesus said,] "It is finished"; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

— Jn 19:30



Good Friday is a somber remembrance of Jesus' crucifixion and death on the cross. It is a day of fasting and penance and a time to examine all of the places in our lives where we fail to follow Christ and fall into sin. Good Friday is not only a commemoration of a historical event; rather, Christ's sacrificial death on the cross, along with his glorious resurrection, comprise the heart of the Christian faith.

The church is bare on Good Friday, the altar stripped of ornamentation and the tabernacle left open and empty. Good Friday is a day of mourning. Traditionally, there is no music (other than chanting) on this day, and the prayer of consecration is also



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omitted from the service as a sign of what Christ's sacrifice on the cross truly means. Good Friday is not a Mass; the Holy Communion that is given out has been consecrated on Holy Thursday and kept in the tabernacle for adoration.

The service is divided into reading of the Passion, Veneration of the Cross, and reception of the Eucharist. Christ's passion is read from the Gospel of John and concludes with the prayers of the faithful, offered for the unity of the universal Church. The Veneration of the Cross is a time for the faithful to individually revere the Cross and ponder the enormity of Christ's salvific act. Holy Communion is then distributed, and the priest, along with the entire congregation, departs in silence.