

Faith in 5

Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and the Triduum

Lent: Week 7

Adults

PART I

Holy Week, the Triduum and Easter - the holiest days in the Catholic liturgical year, are worthy of detailed discussion. These topics will be divided in two parts:

Part I: Palm Sunday – Good Friday (this week)

Part II: Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday

Please note: this is a general summary of what you may witness during the liturgies, depending on your region or parish tradition and guidelines.

1. **Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter** begins the solemn week known as Holy Week. It is the day we commemorate Jesus' entry into Jerusalem for the Passover holiday. People heard about Jesus' works and excitedly greeted him, waving palm branches, and exclaiming, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel!" (John 12:12-13). Hosanna is an expression used in adoration and praise; palms were waved during joyous occasions of victory. The people believed Jesus came to save them from the grip of the Romans. Their joyous cries would turn into cries of betrayal and contempt for the Lord later in the week.
 - On Palm Sunday, there is distribution of blessed palms to the faithful. Depending on your parish, the faithful wave their palm leaves and may participate in a procession or entrance into the church led by a cross adorned with blessed palms. This is a joyful moment!
 - Priests wear red vestments, symbolic of passion and blood. It is worn during the feasts of the martyrs, Good Friday, Palm Sunday, and the Pentecost.
 - The entrance antiphon or liturgy of the Word may recall the event of Jesus' joyful entry to Jerusalem, the Gospel recalls Christ's passion, crucifixion, and death on the cross. During the proclamation of the Gospel, the faithful actively participate with the priest and ministers as it is read aloud. You will have an opportunity again to participate similarly during the Gospel reading at the Celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday.

The Triduum – the Holiest days of the week: Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil

2. **Holy Thursday** marks the institution of two sacraments: Holy Eucharist and Holy Orders.

The Last Supper marked the last time Christ was with his disciples. Jesus gave us the gift of His Body and Blood and instructed us to worship by remembering Him in this way (Matthew 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:17–20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). He shared His great love for us, "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:31-35). Jesus also

washed the feet of His disciples. What great love and compassion God has for us! He instructed us to do “likewise”, serving others humbly and lovingly (John 13:1-15). Christ instituted the new covenant (Luke 22:19-20) and said to Peter, “If I do not wash you, you have no part in me” (John 13:8) established the ministerial role of priests.

- Mass may be concelebrated – all priests of the parish are invited to participate.
- During the Mass (also known as the Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper), you will see the blessed oils: Oil of the Sick, Oil of the Catechumens, and the Chrism oil. Depending on your region, the oils are blessed by the bishop during a Chrism Mass and are received by the parish during this liturgy.
- After the homily, you may witness the Washing of Feet. Here, selected faithful are seated and the priest, assisted by ministers -wash and dry their feet. The priest, acting in love and humble obedience to God; for the faithful, a reminder that Jesus has given us a responsibility to care for others, even in the smallest of ways.
- After communion comes the Transfer of the Blessed Sacrament. Incense is used and special songs are sung. The priest dons’ special garments, covers the Blessed Sacrament with a veil and processes to a place of repose and adoration for the faithful. The mood is both solemn and subdued.
- The faithful are invited to Adoration of the Eucharist, to spend time in prayer and meditation in the presence of our Lord. Recall the events that took place in the garden of Gethsemane - how Jesus prayed and asked for mercy. Though he knew what was to happen, He accepted God’s Will. He wept and asked his disciples to stay awake with him. Imagine Jesus asking us to keep watch with Him during Adoration.

3. **Good Friday** is the day Christ suffered terribly at the hands of the Romans. He was beaten, despised by many, and made to carry a cross to His crucifixion. Even as He hung on the cross, Jesus asked God to forgive those who hurt Him (“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34)). Jesus also gives His mother Mary to his disciple, John the beloved (John 19:26-27). As Catholics, we believe Jesus gave His mother to us, His Church.

Mass is not celebrated; there is no consecration of bread and wine. On this day, we experience deep sorrow for the loss of Jesus who has not [yet] triumphed over sin and death. The Celebration of the Lord’s Passion includes Liturgy of the Word, Veneration of the Cross, and Holy Communion.

- Inside the church, the atmosphere is somber; holy water is removed and the tabernacle which houses the Blessed Sacrament is empty. The altar is bare (though candles and an altar cloth are brought out for Holy Communion). The priest wears red vestments and prostrates himself after processing in silence before the altar. This represents deep humility and trust in God, and reverence for Christ’s sacrifice.
- The liturgy of the Word includes the Gospel account of the passion, crucifixion, and death of our Lord. There is active participation of the faithful, priest and ministers as it is read aloud.

-Solemn or Holy intercessions (10 in all) are recited with special prayers and may be sung. These prayers are said for the Church and the world. The faithful respond and may be instructed to stand or kneel during each intercession.

- During Veneration of the Cross, the priest will raise a cross (in some parishes, a simple wooden one may be used) for the faithful to see. The cross is covered but is slowly exposed each time it is elevated. Three times the priest will elevate the cross and proclaim, "Behold the Wood of the Cross, on which hung the Savior of the world"; the faithful respond, "Come, let us worship". The faithful have an opportunity to honor and venerate the cross, by kissing or touching it as a demonstration of love for Christ and our deep gratitude for what He did for us.

-For Holy Communion, consecrated hosts are brought out with candles to the altar. After communion, the altar is stripped bare once more. The faithful depart quietly. **On this day until Easter Vigil, it is recommended to spend this sacred time in prayer and meditation.** Catholics fast and abstain from meat according to church guidelines.