

## PALM SUNDAY - HOLY WEEK - SACRED TRIDUUM - EASTER

### **What is Holy Week?**

Holy Week is an important time for Christians throughout the world. Holy Week, the final week of Lent, begins on Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter. Holy Week is a time when Catholics gather to remember and participate in the Passion of Jesus Christ. The Passion was the final period of Christ's life in Jerusalem. It spans from when He arrived in Jerusalem to when He was crucified.

### **How Do Catholics Celebrate Holy Week?**

Four special ceremonies commemorate the events of Christ's Passion from His entrance into Jerusalem, when palm branches were placed in His path, through His arrest on Holy Thursday and Crucifixion on Good Friday, to Holy Saturday, the day that Christ's body lay in the tomb.

The summit of the Liturgical Year is the Easter Triduum—from the evening of Holy Thursday to the evening of Easter Sunday. Though chronologically three days, they are liturgically one day unfolding for us the unity of Christ's Paschal Mystery.

The single celebration of the Triduum marks the end of the Lenten season, and leads to the Mass of the Resurrection of the Lord at the Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday.

The liturgical services that take place during the Triduum are:

- Mass of the Lord's Supper
- Good Friday of the Lord's Passion
- Mass of the Resurrection of the Lord

**Palm Sunday** recalls Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem. Palm Sunday is known as such because the faithful will receive palm fronds which they use to participate in the reenactment of Christ's arrival in Jerusalem with a procession. In the Gospels, Jesus entered Jerusalem riding a donkey to the praise of the townspeople who laid palms or small branches, in front of him as a sign of homage. This was a customary practice for people of great respect.

**Holy Thursday** commemorates the Last Supper, when Jesus consecrated bread and wine. In the morning, bishops typically gather with priests from their diocese for the Chrism Mass or a day near Holy Week that works best for the Diocese. The Chrism Mass for the Diocese of Buffalo will be celebrated on Holy Tuesday at 7 pm in our St. Joseph Cathedral. They bless holy oils during the Mass. The washing of the feet takes place during the Mass of the Lord's Supper in the evening.

**Good Friday** is one of the most deep and holy days of the year for Catholics. It covers Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion. His death and burial are also memorialized. Good Friday is a day of fasting within the Church. Traditionally, there is no Mass and no celebration of the Eucharist on Good Friday. The Church celebrates the Liturgy of the Good Friday and venerates the Holy Cross of Jesus. The Holy Communion comes from Hosts consecrated on Holy Thursday. Church bells are silent. Altars are left bare. The solemn, muted atmosphere is preserved until the Easter Vigil.

**Holy Saturday** remembers the day which Jesus spent in the grave resting. The Easter Vigil takes place at the end of the day because the new liturgical day begins at sunset, the vigil begins at sunset on Holy Saturday outside the church, where an Easter fire is kindled and the Paschal candle is blessed and then lit. This Paschal candle will be used throughout the season of Easter, remaining in the sanctuary of the church and throughout the coming year at baptisms and funerals, reminding all that Christ is our life and light. After the conclusion of the Liturgy of the Word, the water of the baptismal font is solemnly blessed and any catechumens and candidates for full communion are initiated into the church.

## **EASTER SUNDAY**

The Easter Vigil is the "Mother of All Vigils." Easter Sunday, then, is the greatest of all Sundays, and Easter Time is the most important of all liturgical times. Easter is the celebration of the Lord's resurrection from the dead, culminating in his Ascension to the Father and sending of the Holy Spirit upon the Church. There are 50 days of Easter from the first Sunday to Pentecost. It is characterized, above all, by the joy of glorified life and the victory over death expressed most fully in the great resounding cry of the Christian: Alleluia! All faith flows from faith in the resurrection: "If Christ has not been raised, then empty is our preaching; empty, too, is your faith." (1 Cor 15:14)