

youth

OPUS DEI

Explanation of **Holy Week** Masses & Services



This week we're on a path toward the **Paschal Triduum**. The *what?* It's a three-day celebration of a great mystery: the Death and Resurrection of Jesus for us, in order to save us.

Does that mean longer Masses? It means special celebrations, full of meaning! God wants to speak to us more closely, and He approaches in different ways: through colours, gestures, texts, songs... They're not always easy to understand, but they're not terribly difficult either. Below we'll explain the meaning of each celebration, one day at a time.

Introduction

The Paschal Triduum is right at **the heart of the life of the Church**, and Easter Sunday is the heart of the Triduum. The whole history of salvation flows from these days.

Together we're going to relive the **decisive moments** of our **redemption**, from the Last Supper to the Resurrection.





What happens on Holy Thursday?

The Triduum begins with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday (also called Maundy Thursday). At that dinner with his closest friends, Jesus "invented" the Eucharist, a way to remain physically with us forever.

"It is the night on which Christ left his disciples the testament of his love in the Eucharist."

- Pope Francis

Symbols and liturgy on Holy Thursday:

In the Mass of the Lord's Supper, we witness the washing of the feet and a procession with the transfer of the Blessed Sacrament.

Just before Jesus was betrayed, the Gospel tells us that He poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet. The washing of the feet of the Twelve, hours before the crucifixion, announces the greatest love, which is to "give your life for your friends." How far would you go to do good to your friends?

At the end of the Mass, the priest takes Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament to the "chapel of repose," a special Tabernacle, solemnly prepared and made as beautiful as possible. This is done because there won't be any consecration at the Good Friday service the next day, and it is a way to remember Jesus' priestly prayer in the Upper Room.



What happens on Good Friday?

Today, Good Friday, we remember Jesus' death on the Cross.

"Through the texts of Sacred Scripture and liturgical prayers, we will be gathered at Calvary to commemorate the Passion and Redemptive Death of Jesus Christ. In the intensity of the rite of the liturgical action, the Crucifix will be presented to us for adoration." - Pope Francis

This is the climax of the liturgy of the Word: Jesus "gives himself up to death with the full freedom of Love" (St. Josemaria, Way of the Cross, 10th Station). Jesus was not compelled by anyone: He does everything out of love.

Symbols and liturgy on Good Friday:

You'll notice that the altar is bare today, and you can adore the Holy Cross.

The altar is empty in order to evoke the poverty of Jesus' hours of agony. Instead of kissing the altar, the priests prostrate themselves (reverently lie down with their faces to the ground) in adoration.

After the proclamation of the narrative of the Passion, the faithful can kiss the Cross. The adoration of the Holy Cross is a gesture of faith and a proclamation of Jesus' victory over the devil, sin, and death.

Just like we did at the beginning of Lent, today we are invited to fast* and abstain from meat as an external sign of our desire to be closer to Jesus.

* Fasting consists of having just 1 full meal and 2 light meals if you're 18-59 years old.



What happens on Holy Saturday?

Holy Saturday is the day of silence: it is the only day of the year when the Holy Mass is not celebrated.

“While the Word is silent, while Life is in the tomb, those who had hoped in Him are put to the test, they feel orphaned, perhaps even orphaned by God.”
- Pope Francis

But today is also the day when the whole Church gathers around our Lady, like the frightened apostles after Jesus' death.

Symbols and liturgy at the Easter vigil:

Tonight the Church gathers in the most solemn vigil to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus, which is the core of Christian liturgy.

The transition from darkness to light, from death to new life in the Resurrection of the Lord, is expressed through several symbolic elements:

Candlelight, a sign of Christ, the light of the world.

Fire, representing the Holy Spirit ignited by Christ in the hearts of the faithful.

Water, indicating the transition to new life in Christ, the source of life.

The Paschal Alleluia, which is the hymn of pilgrims on their way to the heavenly Jerusalem.

The Gloria (Glory to God in the highest), which we put on “pause” at the beginning of Lent.



What is Easter?

Today is the day when we celebrate the most important news in history: Jesus has risen and has prepared a place for us in Heaven. It's the greatest reason to celebrate!

"It doesn't end with the dove, the eggs, the party, although those are beautiful because they mean the family is celebrating. It's the beginning of a journey towards the mission, towards the proclamation: Christ is risen!"
- Pope Francis