

What is Holy Week?



This week is **Holy Week**, a most sacred time of year. We commemorate and remember the last week of Jesus' life on earth. The season of Lent, the season of sacrifice and self-denial is about to come to an end.

It begins with **Palm Sunday**. On Palm Sunday, we remember Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, which occurred several days before his death. The people of Jerusalem spread palm branches on the road to welcome Jesus as he rode into the city. During this liturgy, palms are distributed to the community and blessed. It continues with the reading of the Passion – the story of Jesus' suffering and death.

It continues with the **Triduum**, which is the three day period marking Jesus' death and burial. It begins on Holy Thursday and concludes as Easter begins.

On **Holy Thursday**, we re-enact the Last Supper, the meal Jesus shared with His apostles on the night he was betrayed and arrested. At the Mass on this day, the priest washes the feet of twelve people, just as Jesus did. We also celebrate the institution of the Eucharist, a central sacrament of the Catholic faith.

We observe **Good Friday** as the day Jesus was crucified and died. It is the most serious and somber day on the Christian calendar. A service is held at three o'clock, the hour he died. It is the only day of the year that we do not celebrate Mass. The communion we receive at this liturgy was consecrated the night before. We also venerate the cross, showing honour and respect for the sacrifice Jesus made for our sake. Good Friday is a day of fasting and abstinence from meat for Catholics.

Holy Saturday is a vigil. It takes place after sundown. We keep watch for the expectant rising of our Saviour. It is the most beautiful liturgy of the entire Church year. It begins in darkness and then there is a lighting and blessing of the new fire. The Easter candle is lit and carried into the church, where it is used to light candles held by the members of the community. The Liturgy of the Word leads us to reflect on the entire story of our faith. On this night, people who have been preparing for months are received through Baptism and Confirmation into the Catholic Church.

This brings us to **Easter Sunday** the MOST important Christian holiday, surpassing even Christmas.