

What is “Holy Week” and what should Christians do to properly recognize and participate in it?

Part 3 of 3

The Easter Vigil. Weeks of fasting and self-denial are directed toward the highest point of the church year, the Easter Vigil, the feast of the resurrection. It ranks first because our entire faith hinges on it. As Paul said, “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is in vain” (1 Cor 15:17). But the pillar of our faith is that “Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor 15:20), and in this firm conviction the Church rejoices with all of the energy it can muster: Alleluia! The Easter Vigil begins with the Service of Light, the lighting of the Easter Candle and the singing of the Easter Proclamation, the Exsultet. Then after an extended Liturgy of the Word, the Vigil continues with the Liturgy of Baptism during which the Litany of Saints is sung, the water of the font is blessed, baptismal promises are made, the candidates are baptized, and for the adults, confirmation is received. The Vigil concludes with the Liturgy of the Eucharist and first Holy Communion for the newly initiated members.

Symbols. The primary symbol of the Vigil is the Easter Candle, also known as the Paschal or Christ Candle, as well as the symbols for baptism: water, a seashell, the font, oil, the white baptismal garment, the baptismal candle, a dove, and three interlocking fish which represent the Trinitarian formula.

Easter Sunday. Easter Sunday is the daytime celebration of the Resurrection of the Lord. The congregation is jubilant over the risen Christ and the triumph of his most holy Cross. The church is festively decorated. The vestments are white and gold. The Glory to God and the Alleluia are restored. The Creed is replaced with the renewal of baptismal promises, followed by a sprinkling rite. The church resounds with a joyful sound: *Jesus Christ is risen today! Alleluia!*

Symbols. Easter symbols include the Easter Cross, a plain cross without a *corpus* draped in flowing white or gold fabrics; three empty crosses; lilies; the palm of victory; an empty tomb; an empty sarcophagus; an empty casket; a pile of burial wrapping; the hand of God; the morning sun; a butterfly; a cracked Easter egg; a trumpet; a Phoenix; pomegranates; a peacock; and the Easter Candle.

Discipleship Action Items. Great news cannot be contained: share the Good News with someone! Jesus preached love, and he died out of love for us. On Easter Sunday go out of your way to love someone with all your might, because where there is love, there is the risen Christ!

Resource:

<https://www.archspm.org/faith-and-discipleship/catholic-faith/what-is-holy-week-and-what-should-christians-do-to-properly-recognize-and-participate-in-it/>