

# Holy Week is here! Here's what you need to know.

Every year Catholic (and many Christians) commemorate the week before Easter Sunday with special traditions and devotions that help them enter into the Passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a special time of the year, culminating in the biggest feast of the Church's calendar. However, it can be a bit confusing as each celebration during this "Great Week" has its own focus and liturgical practices.

Here are the basics of what to look forward to during the week that precedes Easter Sunday.

## **Palm Sunday - March 24<sup>th</sup> at the usual Sunday Mass Schedule**

This day inaugurates Holy Week with the triumphal entrance of Jesus in Jerusalem. In the Gospels Jesus comes to the city riding upon a donkey with the people placing palm branches in front of him. At Mass on this day the congregation relives this event with a procession into the church and a solemn blessing of palm branches. The Passion narrative is also read on this day.

## **Holy Monday - March 25<sup>th</sup>, 8 am Daily Mass offered at St. Thomas the Apostle**

Usually there are no special liturgies on this day, but in the narrative of Holy Week Jesus visits his friends at Bethany and Mary anoints him with precious oil, preparing him for his burial.

## **Holy Tuesday - March 26<sup>th</sup>, 8 am Daily Mass offered at St. Thomas the Apostle & 11 am Chrism Mass offered at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception**

The week continues closer to Jesus' Passion and on this day the liturgy focuses on Jesus announcing Judas' betrayal and Peter's denial. During Holy Week, at a Mass called the Chrism Mass, the priests of the diocese gather and the bishop consecrates the sacred oils used in the sacraments of Baptism, Anointing, and Holy Orders. Each parish receives its annual supply of these oils at the Chrism Mass.

## **Spy Wednesday - March 27<sup>th</sup>, 8 am Daily Mass offered at St. Bridget**

The day before Jesus is betrayed, Judas visits the chief priests of the Temple and promises to give them Jesus in exchange for 30 pieces of silver. This day is traditionally called "Spy Wednesday" in reference to the "spy" or "traitor," Judas. Many parishes and religious communities celebrate a special service of evening prayer known as Tenebrae (from the Latin for growing darkness) on this night, during which Scripture passages on the Passion are read and a candle extinguished after each reading, until the church or chapel is in darkness.

**Holy Thursday - March 28<sup>th</sup>, 6 pm Mass at St. Thomas the Apostle**

Jesus makes his final preparations and celebrates the Last Supper with his apostles. The theme for today is the institution of the Eucharist and the sacrament of the priesthood. It is also called “Maundy Thursday” in reference to the “mandatum,” Jesus’ commandment to love one another, symbolized by his washing of the feet of the apostles; this gesture is often reenacted by the celebrant. At the conclusion of the Mass, the Eucharist is processed in the through the church and placed on a separate altar, called the “altar of repose,” for private adoration until midnight in memory of Jesus’ agony in the Garden on that night.

**Good Friday - March 29<sup>th</sup>, 3 pm Communion Service at St. Bridget & 6 pm Stations of the Cross at St. Thomas the Apostle**

Jesus is brought before Pontius Pilate and condemned to death. He takes up his cross and is crucified on Mount Calvary. There is no celebration of Mass on this day, the most sober day in the Church’s calendar. A commemoration of Christ’s Passion is usually celebrated between 12:00 and 3:00, with the recitation of the Passion narrative, veneration of the cross, and the reception of communion in the form of hosts that were consecrated on Holy Thursday and reserved. A special collection taken up on Good Friday goes to support the Church in the Holy Land. Good Friday is a day of fast and abstinence for all Catholics subject to these requirements.

**Holy Saturday - March 30<sup>th</sup>, 7:30 pm Easter Vigil at St. Thomas the Apostle**

This day is a holy day of “waiting,” when Jesus is said to have “descended into the dead” to bring the just souls who died before his sacrifice on the cross to the glories of heaven. There is no celebration until the Easter Vigil in the evening, which begins in the dark and ends in the light of Christ’s resurrection. It is a beautiful liturgy when those coming into the Catholic faith are baptized and confirmed. The Alleluia and the singing of the Gloria return to the liturgy, and church bells that have been silent through Lent ring joyfully.

**Easter Sunday - March 31<sup>st</sup>, 8 am at St. Bridget & 11 am at St. Thomas the Apostle**

Christ is risen! The joyous day of Easter is here and the liturgy reflects it with beautiful music, flowers and decorations. There is often a renewal of baptismal promises at this Mass and a sprinkling of holy water upon all those present. Easter Sunday begins the 50-day season of Easter, during which Catholics have a duty to receive communion at least once.

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