



The Easter Vigil commences around dusk time on Holy Saturday evening.

Our anticipation increases as we wait to celebrate the Resurrection. There are things we do at the Easter Vigil that we do not do at other times in the church year. We light the new Easter Candle/Paschal Candle from a fire outside to remind us that Jesus is our light in the darkness; we then proceed into the darkened church and we hear the 'Exsultet', the great hymn of praise.

We hear more readings than usual this night as we recall the story of God's great love for his people. Following the readings, the bells are rung and the Gloria is sung, as the time of vigil ends and the first mass of Easter begins. This is followed by the blessing and sprinkling with water and the renewal of our Baptismal promises. We need time to do all these things well with a liturgy that is packed with all the riches of the church, as we are about to begin the fifty day season of Easter.



Easter Sunday - it may seem that once Easter Sunday has passed Easter is finished, but the celebration continues for fifty days.

After forty of those days we celebrate the Ascension of Christ.

We spend the nine days between Ascension and Pentecost praying for the Holy Spirit and on the fiftieth day Pentecost Sunday, Easter ends.

Our celebration of Easter resonates throughout the rest of the year: full of gratitude for Christ's passion, joy in his resurrection and strengthened by the Spirit, we continue our Christian journey.



Three Days

One Feast



Understanding

Holy Week

Holy Week is the high point of the Church's Liturgical year.

During a week rich with signs, symbols, liturgies and readings we celebrate the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Confession is an important part of preparation and it is always good to go to confession in Holy Week. The Sacrament of Reconciliation prepares us to relive the paschal mystery in the liturgies of the church and in our lives, passing with Jesus from death to the great feast of the resurrection.



Holy Week begins with the Mass of **Passion Sunday or Palm Sunday**.

We begin our masses with a procession carrying palms, solemnly commemorating Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. In Holy Week we listen to the entire Gospel account of Christ's passion twice. This year we hear the passion story according to Luke on Palm Sunday and on Good Friday the Gospel of John is always read.

From Monday to Thursday we can live our Lenten promises with particular intensity and on Thursday we begin the great Paschal Triduum – meaning 'three days'. These three days are counted as the Jews and Hebrews counted their days, from sunrise to sunset. Each of those days tells a different part of the story of Jesus' saving action. The Church celebrates one Liturgy each day and all three form part of a single extended liturgy. In fact at the end of Mass on Holy Thursday (also known as 'Maundy Thursday') there is no dismissal and no blessing in the same way as there is no formal beginning and end to the Good Friday Liturgy. The three-day liturgy concludes with the solemn blessing at the end of the Easter Vigil. So, all three form part of one great Liturgy, which you, are invited to celebrate, with the parish community.

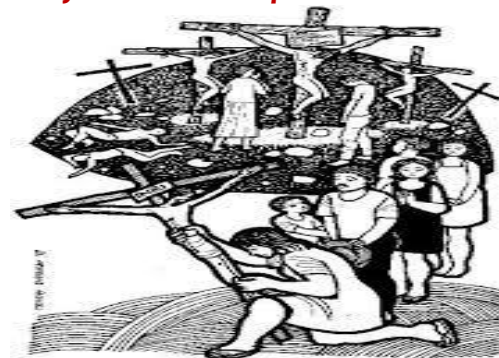


Lent ends quietly at sunset **on Holy Thursday** and the **Triduum** begins.

In Thursday's evening Mass of the Lord's Supper we remember in a special way the institution of the Eucharist, at the Last Supper.

There is also the washing of the feet, a moment when we are reminded that the life of a Christian is to imitate Christ in service and humility. All who serve in Ministry in our parish, in its variety of forms, will be invited to attend and join with the priest in a renewal of promises. After the Mass of the Lord's Supper, the Blessed Sacrament is brought to the altar of repose and reserved there. We are encouraged to stay after mass for a time of adoration, to watch and wait with Jesus as he asked his disciples to do in Gethsemane –

".... stay here and keep watch with me...."



On **Good Friday** the Church invites us all to fast and abstain from eating meat.

On this day we celebrate the Lord's passion. According to the Church's ancient tradition Mass is not celebrated. The altar is bare and the celebrant enters the Sanctuary making the dramatic gesture of prostrating himself before the altar and we all pray in silence together. The act of prostration is recognition of the magnitude of what Christ did for us on the cross.

Our liturgy is in three parts: We listen to John's gospel account of the Passion. The next part involves a solemn veneration of the cross where we each approach the cross and kiss or touch it. This is followed by the reception of Communion. The Holy Communion is removed from the altar of repose for distribution and after some time in prayer we all leave, once more, in silence.