

# Holy Week

## PRAYER FOR HOLY WEEK

Sing, my tongue, the Savior's glory:  
Tell his triumph far and wide;  
Tell aloud the famous story  
Of his body crucified;  
How upon the cross a victim,  
Vanquishing in death, he died.

Faithful cross, O tree all beauteous!  
Tree all peerless and divine,  
Not a grove on earth can show us  
Such a flow'r and leaf as thine.  
Sweet the nails, and sweet the wood,  
Laden with so sweet a load!

Lofty tree, bend down your branches,  
To embrace your sacred load;  
Oh, relax the native tension  
Of that all too rigid wood;  
Gently, gently bear the members  
Of your dying King and God.

—Pange Lingua, Venatius Fortunatus, Sixth century



MARCH 16, 2008

### PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

When Jesus rides into the city of Jerusalem in today's long reading from the Gospel according to Matthew (26:14—27:66), the people greet him like a hero, shouting praises and waving palm branches. We know how quickly things changed. In just a few days Pilate gave in to the crowd that shouted for Jesus to be killed. His friends ran away in fear, and it was a stranger, Simon from Cyrene, who helped Jesus carry the wood on which he would be nailed. He was, like criminals of that time, crucified in public. The leaders looking on and even passers-by mocked him as he waited to die. In the midst of all this, Jesus cried out in prayer the first words from Psalm 22: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" When he died, the

earth quaked and rocks split open. The soldiers who had carried out the crucifixion suddenly realized that Jesus really was the Son of God.

This is the week we do not desert Jesus, but walk with him along the path of his last painful days until the miracle of the promised Resurrection. We are not pretending that we don't know the wonderful ending of the story. But we recall and relive all that happened this week, in prayer and ritual and by hearing it proclaimed again from the scriptures. By pondering Christ's Passion in this way, we understand more deeply how much God loves us. Keep your palm branch from church in a visible and honored place at home this week.



# This Week at Home

## MONDAY, MARCH 17 LOOKING BACK

What were your hopes for observing Lent this year? Recall what you did in prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and any other practices that you intended to live out. Thank the Lord for being there to help you. If there were times you didn't live up to your intentions, what prevented you? What could help you overcome those obstacles in the future?

## TUESDAY, MARCH 18 PLAN TO PARTICIPATE IN THE TRIDUUM

This week is called Holy Week because the holiest days of our Church year occur now. The Sacred Triduum is considered to be one continuous celebration of Christ's dying and rising. It begins on Holy Thursday evening and continues with Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday. The Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday evening is a beautiful and joyful celebration of the institution of the Eucharist. Good Friday is somber with the celebration of the Lord's Passion. Then there is quiet waiting and preparation until the most magnificent high holy celebration of the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday night. Easter morning there is a Mass of the Resurrection of the Lord. Plan now to participate in these services as fully as you can. The Catholic liturgy is at its peak, offering us food for our mind, our senses, our hearts, and our spirits as it relives in word and ritual the heart of our faith: the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19 BREAD THAT IS SPECIAL

Bake some bread today for your family meal on Holy Thursday, or at least buy a special loaf of unsliced bread for the table. Make that meal a special one for the family to share before going to the Mass of the Lord's Supper. Invite friends to join you for the meal and for this first part of the Sacred Triduum.

## THURSDAY, MARCH 20 HOLY THURSDAY—EAT AND DRINK WITH CHRIST

The heart of this solemnity is the institution of the Holy Eucharist. We believe that when Jesus blessed and offered the bread and the cup and told the apostles gathered around the table, "Do this in memory of me" (Luke 22:19) he was giving us instructions to do the same thing. It is no wonder the Church celebrates this feast by singing the Gloria, and with incense, candles, and music. And, in its wisdom, the Church follows Jesus' model with the ritual washing of feet. In Jesus' day, only the servants did this for the guests. Jesus' message is clear in his actions and words: We must wash one another's feet by caring for each other.

## FRIDAY, MARCH 21 GOOD FRIDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

It is helpful if you can arrange quiet time in your household for scripture reading and prayer today, but whatever activities you are called to, go about them with a quiet, prayerful spirit. Place a crucifix in an honored place in your home. Your parish may offer Stations of the Cross as well as the celebration of the Lord's Passion.



## SATURDAY, MARCH 22 HOLY SATURDAY

No celebration of the entire year is as important to the Church as the Easter Vigil. Put on special clothes and a reverent, joyful spirit. Come ready to experience the great mystery of Christ's rising from the dead. Witness the Baptism of new Christians and welcome them into the community. Respond to the baptismal promises with a wholehearted "I do," and savor the sprinkling of holy water that recalls your own Baptism. Christ has risen. We are saved. Fear and sadness can be put aside in the glorious newness of all things in the resurrected Christ.