

# THE THREE DAYS TO SAVE

WHAT WE DO FROM  
HOLY THURSDAY TO  
EASTER SUNDAY



Holy Thursday brings the end to Lent. That night we begin the three days that are the center of our year. Please take a few moments to read this pamphlet. It asks: Why are these three days so important? What do they mean for you? It invites us all to make these three days different from all the days of the year.

*From mid-winter to the end of springtime, the Church keeps the great Paschal Season. It has three parts:*

**40** The Forty Days are not literally forty; this number evokes all the other uses of "forty" in the scriptures. These are the days of Lent, from Ash Wednesday to Holy Thursday. They are days of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. In these ways we try to become as fully as possible the baptized people we are, living by the Gospel—and so we prepare to baptize the elect.

**3** The Three Days are between the Forty and the Fifty. The Triduum (Latin for "three days") begins Holy Thursday night and continues through Good Friday and Holy Saturday. The climax of the Church's whole year is in darkness between Saturday night and Sunday morning. The Church keeps vigil, baptizes the elect, and celebrates the Eucharist. The Three Days conclude on Sunday afternoon.

**50** The Fifty Days are the days of Easter season, from Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday. They are the time of birth, marriage, festival, and feasting. They are like the wedding of earth and heaven, Christ and the Church. The early Church allowed no kneeling and no fasting and sang "alleluia" constantly.



### **WE BEGIN AS HOLY THURSDAY ENDS**

Thursday evening we enter into this Triduum together. After listening to the scriptures, we witness the washing of the feet. The priest-celebrant goes down on his knees with a pitcher of water, a basin, and towels. Jesus gave us this image of what the Church is supposed to look like, feel like, act like.

Next we take up a collection, but not the usual collection (which is for the Church and

the poor). The liturgy makes it clear that tonight's collection is only for the poor. So bring the money you have saved with Lenten fasting. Like the washing of feet, this is a rehearsal for Christian life. Then we celebrate the Eucharist. The evening liturgy has no ending: Whether we stay to pray awhile or leave, we are now in the quiet and peace and glory of the Triduum.

### **AND WE CONTINUE THROUGH GOOD FRIDAY AND HOLY SATURDAY**



The Three Days, this Easter Triduum, is the center, the core of the year for Christians. These are days to save and to savor.

Adults in the community are invited to plan ahead so that the whole time from Thursday night until the Easter Vigil is free of social engagements, free even of work, free of entertainment, free of meals except for the simplest nourishment. We are asked to fast during Good Friday and to continue fasting, if possible, all through Holy Saturday as strictly as we can, so that we come hungry and full of excitement to the Easter Vigil. We make Good Friday and Holy Saturday free for prayer and reflection and preparation and silence. The Church is getting ready.

Whether you are young or old, currently active in the parish or not, please set these days aside. All of us should know that our presence for the liturgies is not just by invitation. We are all needed here. All of us need this whole community together on its greatest days.

On these three days, we gather a number of times with each other. Together we hear some of the Church's most beautiful prayers and scriptures and we make some of our finest music. Please look closely at the parish schedule and make plans to take part in the various liturgies and other gatherings of Holy Thursday night, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. Above all, come on Saturday night for the Vigil.

We gather quietly on Friday and listen to Scripture, including the Passion from the Gospel according to John. We pray at length for all the world's needs.

Then there is another once-a-year

event: The holy cross is held up in our midst and we come forward one by one to do reverence with a kiss or a bow or a genuflection. All the while we sing, not only of sorrow but of the glory of the cross.

We continue in fasting and prayer and vigil, in rest and quiet through Saturday. This Saturday for us is like God's rest at the end of creation. It is Christ's repose in the tomb.



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### **UNTIL THE NIGHT BETWEEN SATURDAY AND SUNDAY**

Hungry now and full of excitement, the Church gathers in the darkness and lights a new fire and a great candle that will make this night bright for us. We listen to some of the most powerful scriptures in our Bible: stories of creation, Abraham and Isaac, Moses and Miriam and the crossing of the sea, poems of promise and rejoicing, the Gospel of the Resurrection.

Then we pray to all our saints to stand with us and we go to the font

and bless the waters. There the elect renounce evil, profess the faith of the Church, are baptized, and anointed. All of us renew our Baptismal promises. For us, these are the moments when death and life meet, when we reject evil and give our promises to God. All of this is in the communion we call the Church. So together we go to the table and celebrate the Easter Eucharist. Easter day begins and we are ready for Fifty Days of rejoicing.

### **AND THEN ON EASTER SUNDAY ALLELUIA IS OUR SONG**



## Scriptures We Will Hear during the Triduum

The scriptures proclaimed during the Triduum liturgies provide rich food for reflection and prayer.

### Holy Thursday, Mass of the Lord's Supper

*Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14*

Ancient instructions for the meal of the Passover.

*1 Corinthians 11:23-26*

Eat the bread and drink the cup until the return of the Lord.

*John 13:1-15*

Jesus washes the feet of the disciples.

### Good Friday of the Lord's Passion

*Isaiah 52:13-53:12*

The servant of the Lord was crushed for our sins.

*Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9*

The Son of God learned obedience through his suffering.

*John 18:1-19:42*

The Passion of Jesus Christ.

### Holy Saturday, Easter Vigil

*Genesis 1:1-2:2 or 1:1, 26-31a*

Creation of the world.

*Genesis 22:1-18 or 22:1-2, 9-13, 15-18*

The sacrifice of Isaac.

*Exodus 14:15-15:1*

The crossing of the Red Sea.

*Isaiah 54:5-14*

You will not be afraid.

*Isaiah 55:1-11*

Come, come to the water.

*Baruch 3:9-15, 32-4:4*

The shining light.

*Ezekiel 36:16-17a, 18-28*

The Lord says: I will sprinkle water.

*Romans 6:3-11*

United with him in death.

*Matthew 28:1-10 (Year A); Mark 16:17-7 (Year B);*

*Luke 24:13-35 (Year C)*

Jesus has been raised up.