



Easter TRIDUUM

Why We Celebrate One Act In Three Days

Lent officially ends at sunset on Holy Thursday, giving way to the most important days of the Liturgical Year, the Easter or Paschal Triduum, (TRIH-doo-um), from the Latin for “three days.” We can see most clearly why Easter itself is so important: Christ’s resurrection from the dead signals our own liberation from sin and death. Just as obviously, without Jesus’ death on the cross on Good Friday, there

would be no need for him to rise from the dead. But what about Saturday, the day Jesus spent in the tomb? See the other side of this sheet for more on the significance of Holy Saturday.

Day 1 • Christ Is the Sacrifice

Christ offered his Body and Blood in the Last Supper on Holy Thursday evening, and then on the Cross of Calvary on Good Friday. After we celebrate the Eucharist, pray and meditate on the Passion, the Church gathers on Good Friday to venerate the cross and contemplate the mystery of Christ’s sacrifice for our salvation.

Day 2 • Christ In The Tomb

Taken down from the cross, Christ is buried in the tomb in preparation for the Sabbath day of rest. As a sign of the Church’s unity with Christ in the tomb, the Church has no Mass today until the evening. As we hold the death of Jesus in our hearts, we recall our own suffering and consider the death that we will all come to experience one day.

Day 3 • Christ Is Raised Up

Though the evening Easter Vigil liturgy begins in darkness, it is soon overcome by the light of candles that fill churches everywhere. When the morning sun rises, alleluias ring out in welcome to our Risen Savior. This solemn feast brings to a joyful climax Christ’s journey from death to life, a journey we hope to share with him.

HOLY SATURDAY

The Crucible of Discipleship

Between the despair of Good Friday and the exaltation of Easter morning comes the silence of waiting. Because we know what is coming, we may not look at Saturday as the first disciples did. For them, uncertain of the next step or direction, it was an agony of loss, a sense of abandonment by God. In our own moments of deepest grief, we certainly know how that feels.

In your own observance of this day, keep in mind those people, perhaps including yourself, who are grieving loss at this time. Commend them to the loving care of the Father who brought such great joy out of the tragedy of the suffering and death of Jesus. The hope of Easter is that we too might share this joy at the end of our suffering. On Holy Saturday, that is only a hope, not a certainty.

CUSTOMS OF THE TRIDUUM

THE MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER. The first day of the Triduum begins in the Upper Room with Jesus sharing his Body and Blood in bread and wine. Many parishes reenact the Washing of the Disciples' Feet during this Mass as well.

THE STRIPPING OF THE ALTAR. At the end of Mass on Holy Thursday, all the altar coverings and decorations are removed, symbolizing the fact that Christ was stripped of his garments upon his arrest.

THE VENERATION OF THE CROSS. The Good Friday liturgy features a reading of the Passion according to St. John, veneration of the cross and Holy Communion as well as prayers for the Church and the whole world.

FASTING. A tradition in the first centuries of the Church was to fast throughout the Triduum or for 40 hours before Easter sunrise.

EASTER VIGIL. The selected set of readings for the Easter Vigil follows the story of salvation from God's creation of the world, the sparing of Noah and his family from the flood and the deliverance of God's people from Egypt to the Gospel accounts of Jesus' rising from the grave to redeem all people.