

HOLY WEEK

Participate in the Wonder of Ancient Traditions

Palm Sunday Traditions

PALMS, PROCESSIONS, & THE PASSION

On Palm Sunday, a week before Easter, the Catholic Church recalls Jesus' messianic entrance into Jerusalem before his crucifixion. As Jesus rode into the city on a small donkey, the Jews gathered around him, throwing cloaks and palm branches on the road and exclaiming praises as he passed by.

At Palm Sunday Mass, there is a blessing of palms which the faithful hold as they process into church. The blessed palms are later kept in the home as a witness to faith in Jesus Christ, the Messianic King, and in his Paschal victory. We have a procession outdoors.

During Palm Sunday Mass, the Gospel account of the Passion of Christ is announced, with the priest, deacon, readers and congregation reading aloud, respectively, the responses of Christ, the Apostles and the crowds who appear throughout the Passion.



VEILED IMAGES

The week before Palm Sunday, we cover or veil—with purple cloth—the religious artwork in the church, except stained glass windows and the Stations of the Cross. In some places, the images are removed altogether.

This somber custom is believed to come from a 9th century German practice of extending a large cloth called the *Hungertuch* (hunger cloth) before the altar from the beginning of Lent. The cloth which hid the altar was not removed until during the reading of the Passion on the Wednesday in Holy Week at the words, "the veil of the temple was rent in two." Crucifixes are unveiled after the Good Friday liturgy and all other images just before Easter vigil Mass on Holy Saturday.

Holy Thursday

THE LORD'S SUPPER

On Holy Thursday, the Catholic Church celebrates a special Mass of the Lord's Supper. It commemorates the institution of the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper. The night before Jesus was crucified, he changed bread and wine into his own Body and Blood, and he commanded the Apostles and their successors to act in his stead and re-present this sacrifice. So at every Mass, by way of Transubstantiation, the bread and wine offered by the priest becomes Christ's Body and Blood again.

WASHING FEET

Just as Christ did for his 12 Apostles at the Last Supper and as he commanded them to do likewise, during the Mass of the Lord's Supper, the priest, who represents Christ, ceremoniously washes the feet of 12 people of the congregation. At the Holy Thursday liturgy in the Vatican, even the pope performs the foot washing. In fact, across the centuries, it has been practice for the pope to wash the feet of 12 priests after Mass and of 12 or 13 poor men after his dinner.

GOING WITH JESUS TO GETHSEMANE

After the Last Supper, Jesus went to pray with his apostles in the Garden of Gethsemane. After Holy Thursday Mass, the remaining sacred hosts are carried out of the sanctuary to an *altar of repose*. The people go with Christ in a procession. People stay for a time, adoring the wondrous sacrament that Jesus instituted 2,000 years ago. Some make an adoration visit at their own parish and then visit seven others into the night.

A VACANT CHURCH: following Night Watch at midnight, the church—now without the Eucharist—is truly empty. The tabernacle light, which is always lit and signifies Christ's presence, is extinguished, and the tabernacle door is left open, exposing the vacant space inside. The altar is stripped bare of its linens and candles, holy water is removed from the church's fountains, and the sacraments are not celebrated until Easter vigil. Like the first Christians bereft of Jesus and mourning the two days after the crucifixion, the church stands unadorned until the Easter vigil Mass on Saturday night.

Good Friday

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

The Stations of the Cross devotion is centered on the Passion of Christ. While many Catholics pray the meditative prayer on their own across the year, it can be an especially poignant experience during Holy Week, when the entire church recalls the way of Jesus' suffering and death. On Good Friday, many churches host parish-wide Stations of the Cross. By praying the Stations of the Cross, a person makes a spiritual pilgrimage to the principal scenes of the salvific Passion of the Lord, aided by artistic representations of those scenes, for example, Pilate's condemnation of Christ to death and the nailing of Christ to the Cross. Usually, Stations of the Cross are found inside churches, spaced in intervals on the walls, but sometimes outdoors such as at Cloisters on the Platte.



EMBRACE THE CROSS

On Good Friday, we gather for the Liturgy of the Lord's Passion, which includes a reading of a Gospel account of the Passion, Holy Communion (which were consecrated at Mass on Thursday) and veneration of the Cross. Veneration: a priest or deacon holds a wooden crucifix while the faithful process to him at the foot of the sanctuary, as if to receive communion. Each person reverences the crucifix with a kiss or a bow.

HOLY SATURDAY: THE PASCHAL FAST

If possible, Good Friday's fast is continued until Easter Vigil as the "paschal fast" to honor the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus and to prepare ourselves to share more fully and to celebrate more readily his Resurrection.