



The Liturgical Seasons of the Catholic Church



HOLY WEEK

A Time for Reflection, Meditation and Remembering the Final Week of Christ's Life
"Be still and know that He is God" (Psalm 46:10).

· Matthew 21:1 – 28:20 · Mark 11:1 – 16:8 · Luke 19:28 – 24:53 · John 12:12 – 21:25

The last week of Lent is known as Holy Week. It is when Christians remember the last week of Jesus' life and is the most important time in the Christian year.

Jesus knew that the time had come for His "Passion." That meant he knew it was time for Him to suffer and die to pay for the sins of the whole world so that He fulfilled God's plan. During the week, we learn that the events that lead Jesus to the cross were filled with intrigue, suspense and an impending sense of disaster. There are many church services and processions during this week to celebrate the events of the week.



Palm / Passion Sunday marks the start of Holy Week

... Palm Sunday is both a happy and sad day. Christians are happy because they are singing praises to Jesus but also sad because they know Jesus died less than a week after His arrival in Jerusalem.

It reminds Christians of the journey Jesus made into Jerusalem, on a donkey, to celebrate the Jewish festival of Passover (Pesach). Jesus chose a donkey to show that He had come in peace. Many people welcomed Jesus by waving palm branches and throwing down branches and coats in the path of the donkey and shouting,

"Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

They hoped that Jesus was the Saviour, the Messiah, who the Bible had promised, come to save them.

In Churches, on Palm Sunday, Christians are given palm leaves or small palm crosses made from palm leaves. Left over palm crosses are kept for the special church service on the first day of Lent, the following year, when they are burnt and the ash is put on people's foreheads (Ash Wednesday.) The Gospel that is read tells of Christ's Passion so that is why it is also known as Passion Sunday.



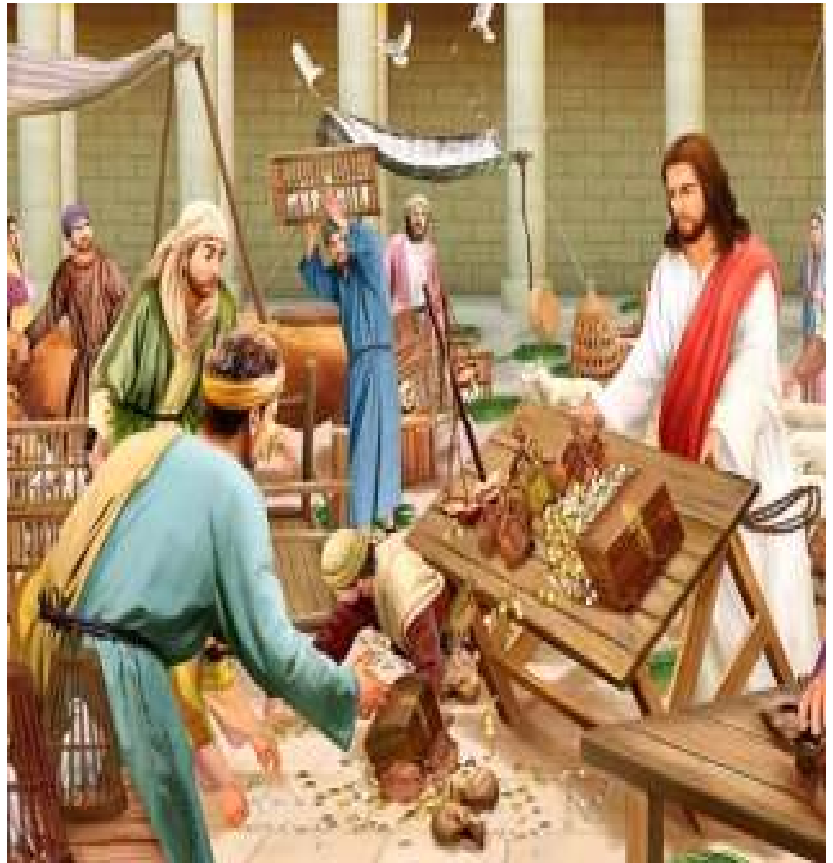
Holy Monday

The Cleansing of the Temple

Jesus went to the temple. When He got there, He threw out the people who exchanged money and sold animals for use in the temple. He said,

“Scripture says,
'My house will be called a house of prayer,'
but you're turning it into a gathering place
for thieves”

Many of the religious leaders didn't like what Jesus said since they thought He was talking about them. So, they decided to find a way to kill Jesus. They had Him followed, went to places he was teaching and they tried to trap Him with questions they asked Him to prove He had broken the Jewish Laws and was trying to incite an uprising against the Romans.



Holy Tuesday

The next few days Jesus continued to teach both His friends and the crowds who came to listen. He continued to speak against the wrong people did and taught them how to live and follow in His footsteps.

The Fig Tree

Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves.

Then he said to it, “May you never bear fruit again!” Immediately the tree withered.

When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. “How did the fig tree wither so quickly?” they asked.

Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”



The Sandhedrin - The Pharisees and the Saduchees

Later, Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you this authority?"

Jesus replied, "I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John's baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?"

They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' But if we say, 'Of human origin'—we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet."

So they answered Jesus, "We don't know."

Then He said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

The Parable of the Bridegroom and the 10 Handmaids

"The Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten handmaids who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'

Then all the handmaids woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'

'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'

But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The handmaids who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

Later the others also came. 'Lord, Lord,' they said, 'Open the door for us!'

But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I don't know you.'

Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour that the Son of Man cometh."

We should heed this warning to always be prepared.



Spy Wednesday

In Christianity, Holy Wednesday, is also called Spy Wednesday, or Good Wednesday, and Holy and Great Wednesday and it commemorates the Parable of the Two Debtors and the Bargain of Judas.

The Parable of the Two Debtors appears in Luke 7:36-7:50, where Jesus uses the parable to explain that the woman who has anointed him loves him more than his host, because she has been forgiven of greater sins.

And Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he replied, "Say it, Teacher."

"A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?" Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more."

And He said to him, "You have judged correctly."

Turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little."

Then He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven."

Those who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this man who even forgives sins?"

And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."



One of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, who was fed up and angered by Jesus' actions, went to the Chief Priests and said, "What are you willing to give me if I hand Him over to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver, and from that time on he looked for an opportunity to hand Him over.

What is so significant about "Spy Wednesday" is that theologically it reflects the daily struggles we all endure in order to accept a relationship with the Lord, especially if we feel things are not going our way or moving quickly enough: we forget to trust that God knows what He is doing, has our best interests at heart and wants us to be the very best versions of ourselves that we can be and so we can choose to walk a different path for a time: To live the life that Jesus intended for us is a perpetual struggle on a daily basis with good and evil.

As believers in the power of God's love and goodness, Spy Wednesday, should provide a period for reflection and introspective prayer. We need to examine our lives and look for the moments that we have falsely shared intimacy with our brothers and sisters in faith. More precisely, contemplate a lack of true, "communio" in our lives. Jesus sees right through our own appearances when we falsely present ourselves as holy and faithful followers. Our frail human spirit reflects in our sinful acts and lack of faith, yet we can turn back to Him.

Maundy Thursday – Start of the celebration of the Sacred Triduum.

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples approached Jesus and said, "Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?" He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The teacher says, "My appointed time draws near; in your house I shall celebrate the Passover with my disciples."'" The disciples then did as Jesus had ordered, and prepared the Passover.

So on the night before his death Jesus had a final meal with his friends. Before this festival meal for Passover, Jesus surprised his friends by washing the feet of every person, a task that was normally done by a servant. He wanted to show his followers that they should love one another in humble ways and be a servant to one another.



When it was evening, he reclined at table with the Twelve.

And while they were eating, he said,

"Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me."

Deeply distressed at this, they began to say to him one after another,

"Surely it is not I, Lord?"

He said in reply,

"He who has dipped his hand into the dish with me is the one who will betray me.

The Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed.

It would be better for that man if he had never been born."

Then Judas, His betrayer, said in reply,

"Surely it is not I, Rabbi?"

He answered, "You have said so."

Clearly, the powers of good and evil, light and darkness, sin and salvation are poised here ready to exhibit themselves later in the week at the place we call Golgotha.

The account of Jesus betrayal seems to show Jesus' deep understanding of His role as the Messianic fulfillment. The tranquility of Jesus' realization of His mission provides us with hope for the days to come. As rather than provide a discourse to the Twelve, Jesus calmly recalls the Old Testament references to Him and even shares a piece of food with Judas, simultaneously dipping a morsel into the bowl and identifying him.

Judas in his interrogatory and somewhat cynical half statement of, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" provides the catalyst for the process of darkness to unravel. Judas' false interrogatory response to Jesus, reveals his true self. Betrayer. Jesus sees right through Judas' false piety and friendship with His response, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.

We should remember that the act of sharing a meal with others is a deeply rooted notion of intimacy and close relationship. Jesus is sharing the meal, not with strangers, but with intimate friends.

At this time Jesus, also foretells Peter's denial - not once but three times before the cock crows. Peter too protests these actions should be his, yet later Jesus will once again be shown to be right; we need to remember He sees and knows all that is in our hearts and how we will act in certain circumstances if we have doubts. Sometimes when we are questioned about our transgressions, we, sometimes answer back. "It's not me Lord." Often, we dip morsels and share food with those we love; we feign intimacy and even deceive one another.



Jesus is not blind to the events that are revealing themselves as a result of Judas' clandestine negotiations. Judas has turned on Jesus' friendship and love - become an enemy. We too in our lives are sometimes turned against Jesus' love through sinful and unloving activities. There is a real message here in Jesus' tranquil resignation to the events that are coming. Faith in the love and power of the Father.

Later in the meal, which is known to Christians as 'The Last Supper', Jesus passed round bread and wine. He said the bread was his body broken for them and the wine was his blood shed for them, to forge a new covenant with God so that we may return to live in Paradise with Him. By this He was telling them that he was going to die and that when they shared bread and wine in future they should remember him and what He had done and what it meant for everyone if they accepted God into their lives.

Christians share bread and wine at their church services all year round every time Holy Mass is celebrated, but it is even more special on Maundy Thursday. Jesus also told his friends that they should love one another, as He loved them. It was later on this night that Judas betrayed Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Before 1689 it was customary in England for the king or queen to wash the feet of the poor in Westminster Abbey every Maundy Thursday. They also gave them gifts of food and clothing. In Queen Victoria's time men received clothing, shoes and stockings and women 35 shillings.

Today rather than wash feet or give clothing our Queen gives out specially made Maundy money in white and red leather purses. The white purse contains silver Maundy coins matching the Queen's age in pence, while the red purse contains ordinary money. In 2019 this will be given to 93 male and 93 female pensioners, because she is 93 years old this year. The service takes place at a different cathedral or abbey each year and people are chosen to receive the money because of good work they have done in their community.

Good Friday - Part of the celebration of the Sacred Triduum.

Also known as Holy Friday, Great Friday or Black Friday. It is known as Good Friday because Christians believe that Jesus gave up his life for the good of everyone.

On Good Friday Christians remember the day that Jesus was crucified on the cross at Calvary or Golgotha (The Place of the Skull.)



According to the gospels, Jesus was betrayed by Judas on the night of the Last Supper, commemorated on Holy Thursday. The morning following Christ's arrest, he was brought before Annas, a powerful Jewish cleric. Annas condemned Jesus for blasphemy for refusing to repudiate Annas' words that He was the Son of God. From there, Jesus was sent to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of the province.

Pontius Pilate questioned Jesus but found no reason to condemn Him. Instead, he suggested Jewish leaders deal with Jesus according to their own law. But under Roman law, they could not execute Jesus, so they appealed to Pilate to issue the order to kill Jesus.

Pilate appealed to King Herod, who found no guilt in Jesus and sent Him back to Pilate once again. Pilate declared Jesus to be innocent, and washed his hands to show that he wanted nothing to do with Jesus, but the crowds were enraged. To prevent a riot and to protect his station, Pilate reluctantly agreed to execute Jesus and sentenced him to crucifixion. Jesus was convicted of proclaiming himself to be the King of the Jews.

After all His trials and tribulations at the hands of the Sanhedrin, King Herod and Pontius Pilate before his execution, Jesus was flogged, which was a customary practice intended to weaken a victim before crucifixion. Crucifixion was an especially painful method of execution and was perfected by the Romans as such. It was reserved for the worst criminals, and generally Roman citizens, women, and soldiers were exempt in most cases.

During his flogging, the soldiers tormented Jesus, crowning Him with thorns and ridicule.

Following his flogging, Jesus was compelled to carry his cross to the place of His execution, at Calvary. During his walk to the site of His execution, Jesus fell three times and the Roman guards randomly selected Simon, a Cyrene, to help Jesus.

After arrival at Calvary, Jesus was nailed to a wooden cross by Roman soldiers and crucified between two thieves. One of the thieves repented of his sins and accepted Christ while on the cross beside Him. A titulus, or sign, was posted above Christ to indicate His supposed crime. The titulus read, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." It is commonly abbreviated in Latin as "INRI" (Iesus Nazarenus, Rex Iudaeorum).

During Christ's last few hours on the cross, darkness fell over the whole land. Jesus was given a sponge with sour wine mixed with gall, a weak, bitter painkiller often given to crucified victims.

Prior to death, Jesus spoke His last words, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" This line is the opening of Psalm 22, and it may have been common practice to recite lines of songs to deliver a greater message. Properly understood, the last words of Christ were triumphant. Guards then lanced Jesus' side to ensure He was dead.

At the moment of Christ's death, an earthquake occurred, powerful enough to open tombs. The long, thick curtain at the Temple was said to have torn from top to bottom.

Following the incredible events of the day, the body of Christ was removed from the cross and laid in a donated tomb, to be buried according to custom.

The Crucifixion is remembered in Jerusalem even today. Large crowds of Christians take the same path as Jesus walking The Way of the Cross - The Via Dolorosa. Many use the Stations of the Cross (a 14-step devotion) to guide their thoughts as the events of Good Friday are commemorated in them on all Wednesdays and Fridays during Lent. Another devotional, the Acts of Reparation, may also be prayed.

In some countries people act out the story of Jesus' last day, while others watch and think about the events which happened long ago.

Good Friday is a day of fasting within the Church. Traditionally, there is no Mass and no celebration of the Eucharist on Good Friday. A liturgy may still be performed and communion, if taken, comes from hosts consecrated on Holy Thursday. Baptism, penance, and anointing of the sick may be performed, but only in unusual circumstances. Church bells are silent. Altars are left bare. Good Friday is a sad day and churches never have flowers or decorations on this day. The church is left dark and there is just a simple cross on the altar.

The events of Good Friday is the reason why the cross is an important sign for Christians today. There are crosses in churches and many Christians wear a cross on a chain. At Easter people also traditionally eat hot cross buns which have a cross shape on the top to remind them of Jesus.

