

# Entering into the Holiest Week of the Year

## Holy Week Schedule

**T**he events of Holy Week changed the world and are, therefore, the holiest days of the year. The sacred liturgies observed during this week remember and make present again the passing of Jesus from death to new life—what is called the Paschal Mystery. You will want to go through the entire week with Christ, dying to selfishness and sin in order to rise to new life along with Him.

### Palm Sunday

Time:

Palm Sunday is the first day of Holy Week, which commences with the blessing of palms and the reading of the Gospel somewhere outside the nave. A procession into church, with people holding blessed palm branches and singing festive songs follows, in imitation of the triumphant entrance of Jesus from Bethany to Jerusalem. Immediately afterwards, the theme of triumph changes radically with the reading of the Passion narrative, devoted to the suffering of Christ, which He endured for love of you.

### Preparation Days

Time:

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Holy Week are preparation days, both spiritually and physically, for the holiest days to come later in the week. It is a most appropriate time to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Wednesday of Holy Week is known as Spy Wednesday. This gets its name because this is the day on which Judas betrayed Jesus to the Sanhedrin. Because Judas is thought to be sneaky, his actions conjured up the image of a spy.

The Chrism Mass is one of the diocesan highlights at which the Bishop blesses the oils for the celebration of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Anointing of the Sick, and consecrates the Sacred Chrism used in the Sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Orders. Priests also renew their priestly promises at this Mass, and the faithful pray for them. The Chrism Mass will be celebrated on Tuesday, April 4, at 10:30 a.m., at St. Joseph the Workman Cathedral in La Crosse. All are welcome to attend.

### Holy Thursday

Time:

Holy Thursday begins the Sacred Triduum – which means three days. On this first day the Church commemorates the events surrounding the Last Supper and the institution by Christ of the Holy Eucharist. At the Last Supper Jesus was with His Apostles celebrating the Passover, the annual memorial of the mystery of the Jews’ escape from Egypt, and the “passing over” of the angel of death. The Passover was an exodus, or passage, from the oppression of slavery to spiritual freedom. On this night before His crucifixion, Jesus commanded that this Passover be celebrated in a new way as an unbloody anticipation of His sacrificial and saving death that would take place the next day on the cross. This was (is) the new Passover of the Lord in which we are freed from slavery to sin and death through our cooperation with His divine life of grace received in Holy Communion.

A solemn ritual of washing of feet takes place in imitation of Jesus who humbly served His Apostles by washing their feet. Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you.... By this, all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34, 35)

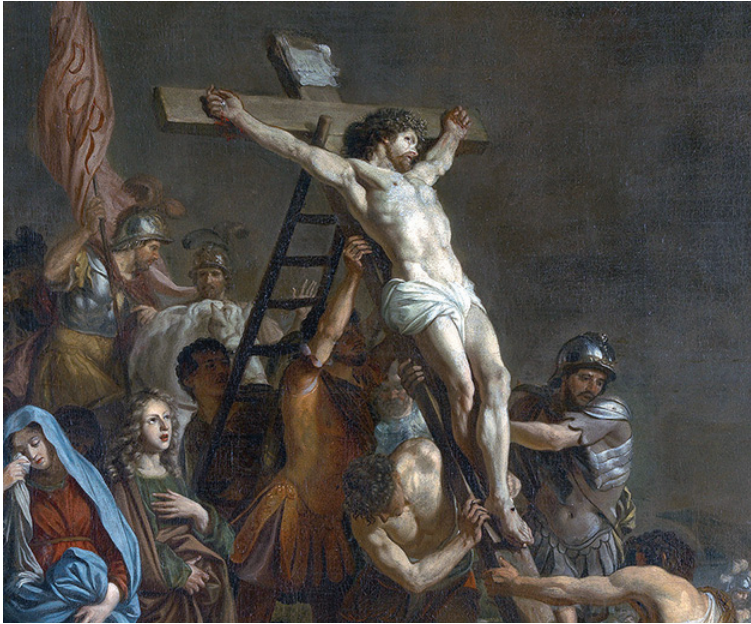
At the end of Mass, consecrated Hosts—the true presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist—are carried in procession to the side chapel of adoration. These Hosts will be received the next day in Holy Communion. After placing the Holy Eucharist in the tabernacle, an atmosphere of quiet watching with the Lord begins. This commemorates how Jesus went with His Apostles to the Garden of Gethsemane, and asking them (and you) to watch and pray with Him. Jesus prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup [of suffering] pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will it.” (Matthew 26:39) “And being in agony He

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DIocese of LA CROSSE, WI

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prayed more earnestly; and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground.” (Luke 22:44) Remain with Jesus in His agony over what He knew He would endure for the sins of the world.

## Good Friday

Time:

The second day of the Sacred Triduum is the Passion of the Lord, known as Good Friday, the commemoration of the death of Jesus on the cross outside the walls of Jerusalem. The theme of this day throughout history has been one of quiet sorrow and mourning for the crucified and dead Jesus. Consider spending the hours of 12- 3 p.m. in quiet prayer, giving up even a drink of water, as this was the time that Jesus hung on the cross and died at 3 p.m.

The emphasis of the liturgy on this solemn day is on Scripture readings and prayers, the veneration of the cross, and the reception of the Eucharist consecrated on Holy Thursday.

## Holy Saturday

Time:

The daytime hours of Holy Saturday continue the atmosphere of Good Friday, and have been observed as a time of quiet and fasting. The Easter Vigil on the evening of Holy Saturday is the night of all nights and the primary celebration of Jesus' Resurrection. The elaborate and beautiful ritual of the Easter Vigil has four clearly-defined parts: the service of light, the Liturgy of the Word, the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation and the reception of the risen Christ in Holy Communion.

The service of light begins with a darkened church. The priest lights the Paschal candle, the symbol of Christ's Resurrection. The Paschal candle is used to light small candles held by those in the congregation as all process into the church to the chant of "light of Christ."

The Exsultet is sung which recounts the saving action of Christ, and it is followed by the readings of the Mass, several from the Old Testament, interspersed with responsorial Psalms and prayers. The Liturgy of the Word consists of as many as seven Old Testament readings that recapitulate God's saving action throughout history. The Gloria is then sung with the maximum amount of musical instruments, bells, and choir available to the parish. The Gospel is proclaimed that narrates eye witness accounts of those who encountered the risen Christ, stirring you to a deeper realization that He is alive! There are baptisms, bringing people to new life in Christ followed by confirmation, strengthening them to be bold witnesses for their faith in God. You will renew your own baptismal promises to live more fully as a committed disciple of Christ. The Liturgy of the Eucharist is celebrated with the greatest of joy, leading to our reception of the risen Christ in Holy Communion. This is a day to rejoice that the establishment of the Church and the celebration of the Sacraments are all made possible through the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

## Easter Sunday

Time:

The theme of Easter morning continues the triumphant joy of the Easter Vigil. It remembers and celebrates the very foundation of Christianity: Jesus who is Lord is raised from the dead. You will want to share in this incredible joy by participating, as much as possible, in the holiest Week of the year.

