

WHAT GOES ON IN HOLY WEEK?

An Explanation of the holy days of Holy Week

Holy week is *the* most important week of the year for all Christians because it is the week that God won our salvation. Holy Week traces and recalls Jesus' life, teachings, death, and resurrection beginning with Palm Sunday and ending one week later with the Easter celebration. Let us look at what these days mean for us.

PALM SUNDAY

Jesus entered Jerusalem to crowds waving Palm branches; hailing Him as the King, the Son of David; and shouting "Hosanna!" which means "save us now." While many did not realize how He would save them, by the end of the week Jesus will have died and risen to forgive sins and rescue from sin, Satan, death and hell.



Historically, each Gospel's account of Christ's suffering and death was read during holy week. We keep this tradition by reading from a different Gospel each year as part of the Palm Sunday readings.

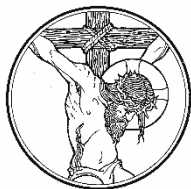
HOLY THURSDAY

On the night that our Lord Jesus Christ was betrayed, we celebrate the meal of salvation He instituted for us. In, with, and under the bread and wine of the Lord Supper, Jesus gives us His true body and blood for us Christians to eat and to drink. When we eat and drink in faith of the Lord's Supper we receive forgiveness just as Christ has promised. This night ends with the stripping of the altar, which signifies the depth of our Lord's servanthood, giving everything to save us.



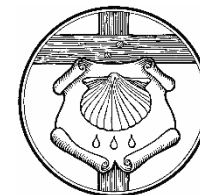
GOOD FRIDAY

This is our Lord's day of victory over sin and Satan, death and hell! Thus, we call it "good" Friday. Yet, like the victory on the cross was veiled under the agony of the crucifixion, our celebration is hidden and veiled under the somber reflection on our sin and what it cost to save us. Nevertheless, as Christ died, He atoned for sin, crushed Satan's hell and released us from death and hell's grip. Christians have since held up the cross as the sign of our salvation!



EASTER VIGIL

On Saturday our Lord rested in the tomb, fulfilling the Sabbath Day and promising us eternal rest in Him. Historically, the Church would gather during the night before Easter and listen to Old Testament readings of God's salvation, baptize new believers, pray, and receive the Lord's Supper. Knowing that Christ has promised to come soon, it was a vigil kept every year as a remembrance, waiting and watching and preparing the heart for our Lord's final coming. The service ended at dawn on Easter morning with a joyful celebration of our Lord's resurrection.



In our Saturday vigil, we do the same. In the quiet, contemplative darkness we wait and watch and joyfully rejoice in being Christians. We pray, we joyfully hear those stories of salvation, we remember our baptisms, and receive the Lord's Supper. It is a service of rest and joy.

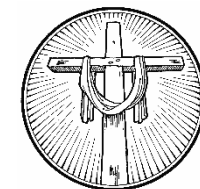
EASTER SUNRISE

This service grew out of the Easter Vigil as Christians celebrated the resurrection of our Lord with the dawn of Easter. In many churches throughout the world, this sunrise service takes place in the cemetery as Christians celebrate the resurrection and look forward to that day when Christ comes in glory to raise all believers in Christ from the dead to live with Him forever.



EASTER DAY

The celebration of our Lord's resurrection is the second pillar of the Christian's faith along with our Lord's incarnation at Christmas. On Easter, Jesus rose from the dead and showed by many appearances that sin, death, hell, and Satan really were overcome with His death on the cross. His resurrection is the proof!



His resurrection also means that all of us who believe in Him will be raised from the dead. With perfect and glorified bodies we will live with God forever in the new heavens and the new earth, and we will enjoy a blessed reunion with all our loved ones and all who have died in the Lord.

His resurrection is reason to rejoice for it means that forgiveness, life, and salvation are ours through Him. So on this day we say boldly and joyfully, "Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!"