

# Holy Week

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## *The Center of the Christian Year*

The Christian faith makes the bold claim that the nature, identity, and purpose of everything is found in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of a Jewish rabbi who lived in Palestine some 2,000 years ago: Jesus of Nazareth. This man we confess to be the Messiah, the long awaited king of Israel, who ushered in the time of fulfillment of God's promises to His people. We confess this man to be fully God, the second person of the three-personed God, who took on flesh, entered our reality, and displayed His power and might through the cross and empty tomb.

Our church year focuses us on this life of Jesus: from Advent to Christ the King Sunday, we live his story and seek for it to become more and more our own. In Holy Week the desire is intensified with services designed to draw us into the final week of Jesus' earthly ministry. Each service offers us a chance to re-order our lives and do something akin to re-enacting these moments. However, we should not mistake these as simply poorly pulled off plays. The aim of the Palm Sunday process, Maundy Thursday dinner and stripping of the altar, Good Friday way of the cross, and Easter Vigil new fire is about nature, identity, and purpose. We find God, we find our world, and we find ourselves in deeper ways as we place ourselves in the scene.

Holy Week 2020 will be memorable for how different it is from our normal routine. Our lives have been re-ordered by the edict to stay at home. And yet, our obedience to this directive has shown how such a re-ordering can be done in light of an impinging reality. In the liturgies we provide for Holy Week, we are invited to re-order, not for the sake of a virus, but for the sake of Christ. While we are not able to gather for these potent and significant services, there is an opportunity for each of us to appropriate each scene of Christ's passion and resurrection in a different, and perhaps more personal way, through our present circumstances. At least, this will be my prayer for each of us during this Holy Week.

In the pages that follow, each day is explained and some activities are recommended to mark the day as special. These are provided as aids to discipleship, following Christ in this sacred week. Feel free to be creative and 'riff' off of them; and share your experience as you feel led on our Facebook page or other media.

# Palm Sunday

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*Items to mark the day: Palm frond, or some other greenery. Optional: Votive candle, walking shoes, cleaning supplies*

*Holy Spirit Worship: Sunday service at 4pm on Facebook Live*

## Introduction and Preparation

Palm Sunday is the kick-off for Holy Week. It is when we celebrate Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem and also witness his death. In a way this service is an outline and preview of Holy Week as a whole. It is a service of celebration and sadness, of hope and grief. While we still have the shouts of Hosanna ringing in our ears, we suddenly hear calls to "Crucify!" It is a service of extremes. It is a service which sets the pace and tempo for the rest of the week. Usually this service starts off with a procession from outside of the church building in which we reenact the crowd which welcomes Jesus into Jerusalem as their promised king. We join in the procession of those who have long hoped and waited for all things to be made right. The palm fronds represent welcoming home the promised King of Israel to the Holy City of Jerusalem. In many ways this was a welcome which many thought would have led to an enthronement. But his throne was not in a palace but on a cross, surrounded by accusers, and mocked by his subjects. From this scandalous throne, the king seeks to reign in the hearts of His people, purifying their hearts, and preparing them for His the fullness of His kingdom. As such, I encourage each of us to enter into Holy Week with an attitude of humble reception of the king. Two possible ways of doing so in our homes are:

1. Do your own little procession around your house, in your backyard, on your balcony, or around your block or neighborhood. You can put on your walking shoes, bring a palm frond or other greenery, and play worship music on your phone aloud or in your head phones, and take a walk around your block or neighborhood. As you do so, pray that those in the houses you walk by would come to know Jesus as their King and Rescuer. If anyone sees you and asks what you are doing (maintain proper social distance), tell them it is Palm Sunday and you are welcoming celebrating Jesus as your King and Rescuer, and wish them a happy Holy Week and Palm Sunday. You can also take this time to think about all the areas in your life in which you struggle to allow Jesus to be King over. Spend time reflecting and resolving to welcome Jesus into your heart and home with renewed devotion. Once you are done with the walk, in whatever form, place the greenery at the front of your home for passersby to see throughout the day.

*PARENTS NOTE: Depending on the size and age dynamics of your family, you could*

*possibly think about creating a little parade for them to have down your street. Decorate the kids' bikes or scooters or even strollers, and create a family parade to celebrate Jesus as your King and Rescuer. Take time to explain what it means for Jesus to be both your King and Rescuer and Friend.*

2. Prepare your home for company. In our culture we sometimes welcome people with parades and processing; but most often we welcome them with a freshly cleaned house, a nice home ambiance, and maybe a fresh batch of cookies or bread or baked goods or snacks. I would encourage you to prepare for Palm Sunday and Holy Week by taking some time to clean your house and set it up in the same way you would if you were expecting guests. Even to the point of baking something yummy and/or setting out some snacks. This is an embodied way in which we can welcome Jesus into our homes and hearts and feel the reality that Jesus is longing to be our guest and dwell with us.

*PARENTS NOTE: Talk to your kids about what they like about your home. What they miss when they are away from home. Ask them how they would prepare if one of their friends was coming over... Do they set out some toys to play with, clean their rooms, get dressed in their favorite outfits? Whatever it is, encourage them to do it, and tell them this is part of them loving Jesus and welcoming Him as a dear friend.*

# Maundy Thursday

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*Items to mark the day: Votive candle, bread and wine. Optional: water, water basin, towels, special meal.*

*Holy Spirit Worship: Morning Prayer at 7:30am, Instructed Eucharist at 6pm on Facebook Live*

## Introduction and Preparation

The liturgy for Maundy Thursday is the first part of the Triduum—the three sacred days that are really one service in three segments. The word “maundy” comes from the Latin *mandare*—to command, or give an order. In this case, the command comes from Jesus: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you...” (John 13:34). These words were spoken by Jesus to his disciples on the occasion of his washing their feet in the upper room on the eve of his crucifixion, i.e. Thursday evening. The other important event that took place that evening, of course, was the Last Supper, during which Jesus identified His body with the bread of the meal, and His blood with the wine. This was the institution of what we now know as the Holy Eucharist.

After Communion, the focus of attention shifts from the upper room to the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus went to pray and where he was arrested a few hours later. Maundy Thursday gives way to the Eve of Good Friday. This shift in tone is marked dramatically by the removal of every symbol of Christ’s presence among us from the sanctuary: the Altar will be stripped bare, and everything else in the Altar area that is not fastened to the wall or the floor will be removed. While this is taking place, the choir sings Psalm 22 (“My God, my God ...”), after which the lights are turned off. There is no blessing or dismissal, and no organ postlude. Adapting this service to a home setting may look daunting. But I think there are some very special ways in which we can celebrate this service in a meaningful way at home.

1. Share an Agape Meal – One way to celebrate this service at home is with a special meal, especially if you are co-sheltering-in-place with others. Holy Eucharist arose out of the Passover meal and was expanded and adapted into an Agape (love) feast. The core of both the Passover and Agape Feast was a shared meal with loved ones. Ideally this meal is with others, either with those in your home or possibly via Zoom, Facetime, Skype, or a simple phone call. As we are still in Lent, the meal should be simple: some suggestions are soup, cheese, olives, dried fruit, bread, and wine.

In the meal itself, bless the wine, the bread, and the food with the prayers below. As Maundy Thursday commemorates the institution of the Lord’s Supper, have a discussion

during dinner about the significance of communion in your lives. Some prompts for the discussion are: Do you have a particularly important memory of taking communion? If so, share it. What makes communion significant or special for you? Have someone in your group read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 and discuss why Jesus says the bread is his body and the wine his blood. How does eating the bread and drinking the wine proclaim Jesus' death?

#### Prayers for the Meal

*For the Wine:* Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe. You create the fruit of the vine; and on this night you have refreshed us with the cup of salvation in the Blood of your Son Jesus Christ. Glory to you for ever and ever. Amen.

*For the Bread:* Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe. You bring forth bread from the earth; and on this night you have given us the bread of life in the Body of your Son Jesus Christ. As grain scattered upon the earth is gathered into one loaf, so gather your Church in every place into the kingdom of your Son. To you be glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.

*For the rest of the food:* Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe. You have blessed the earth to bring forth food to satisfy our hunger. Let this food strengthen us in the fast that is before us, that following our Savior in the way of the cross, we may come to the joy of his resurrection. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, now and for ever. Amen.

*PARENTS NOTE: Let the kids help set the table for the meal and explain why things are different. Ask them what they miss about church. Include them in the discussion about the significance of communion; you may be surprised at the depth of their responses.*

2. Foot Washing – You can also explore other applications of Christ's command to love one another. One of the traditional ways of doing this during Maundy Thursday is through foot washing. If you are co-sheltering with others, you may want to take turns washing each other's feet. This is an ancient way of showing hospitality, love, and service. You may also want to think of other ways to help show your love for each other. Maybe ask people what their love language is (the best way they give and receive love) and intentionally show them love in the coming days or weeks in their specific love language.

*PARENTS NOTE: Invite kids to help with the foot washing; siblings can wash one another's feet and/or their parents. Ask how your family can serve one another, perhaps by doing a chore for one another after dinner.*

3. Candle Lighting (and Extinguishing) – Light a candle during your evening meal and keep it lit through the service (if you are able to participate). This candle will represent the

light of Christ's Presence during your meal and service. During the liturgy you will blow it out to represent Jesus being taken away to be killed. If you are not able to participate in the service, as you are about to go to bed, say a prayer of gratitude for Christ's faithfulness even unto death, and then extinguish the candle.

*PARENTS NOTE: Kids tend to like fire; perhaps help them to light the candle and let them blow it out. You may also take them through your home and place a covering over any Christian symbols you have displayed (crosses, art, etc.).*

# Good Friday

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*Items to mark the day: Cross. Optional: Somber cloths (preferably black)*

*Holy Spirit Worship: Morning Prayer at 7:30am, Stations of the Cross at 12pm, and Evening Prayer at 6pm on Facebook Live*

## Introduction and Preparation

The Good Friday liturgy is the second part of the Triduum (the sacred three days). This most somber of all days is appropriately marked by fasting, abstinence, and penitence, leading us to focus on Jesus and the meaning of His Cross. Some churches do not use musical instruments or bells on this day. The church is often darkened. The bare, stark appearance of the church serves as a reminder of the solemnity and the sorrow of the day. The Lord of Life was rejected, mocked, scourged, and then put to death on the Cross. The faithful are reminded of the role which their own sin played in this suffering and agony, as Christ took all sin upon himself, in obedience to his Father's will. By the Cross we are redeemed, set free from bondage to sin and death. The Cross is a sign of God's never-ending love for us. It is a sign of life in the midst of death. Good Friday is the service in which we remember Jesus' sacrificial death on the Cross for our redemption.

The name Good Friday is gloriously ironic. It was a horrible day in which Jesus suffered and died in one of the most horrible ways imaginable, but He did this out of love and sacrifice and for our sake and "our good." As you celebrate this somber occasion, create a space and environment in your house of silence and seriousness. Create space for grief and remembering pain and loss. This is not only a remembrance of Jesus' death but a remembrance of our own sinfulness and the brokenness of our world. It is a time to grieve and mourn and process these emotions. But it is also a space in which Christ invites us to remember His love for us.

1. Darkness and Silence – mark the day by observing (as much as possible) silence and with no artificial light. Some homes cover their light switches with masking tape as a reminder that the light of the world was extinguished. Each time this inconvenience is encountered, you can respond by praying "We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world."

*PARENTS NOTE: Observing silence and darkness is harder with little kids. Try brief moments of silence throughout the day and ask the kids to think of Jesus. Another way for kids to enter the deep feelings of Good Friday is point out the loss of Jesus and invite*

*the kids to set aside a favorite toy for the day.*

2. Devotions before the Cross – It is customary in the Good Friday service to reverence the Cross. When we do this we are not worshipping wood but we are using the cross as a sign and symbol of Jesus' love and sacrifice for us. The Church has taught early on, and it was made official doctrine at the 7<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Council, that the reverence and devotion we show to a sign and symbol is transferred to, and counted as directed to the subject of, that sign and symbol. Thus contemplating the cross (or the icon included in this service guide), clinging to it, kissing it, holding it is very much an act of contemplating, clinging to, kissing, and holding Jesus who is the one which the symbol points to in an iconic way. Set a cross up in your home and take time to kneel before it, confessing your sins to Christ, and pondering the wonder of His love for you, for all humanity, and for the whole of creation.

*PARENTS NOTE: This tactile activity is very accessible for children. In addition to them following in the parents' behavior, this is also an opportunity engage with them regarding our emotional response to Jesus. Talk to your children about your own emotions regarding Jesus' death, then ask them how they feel.*

# Holy Saturday

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*Items to mark the day: Walking shoes, baptismal candle or other memorabilia, eggs*

*Holy Spirit Worship: Morning Prayer at 7:30am, Evening Prayer at 6pm, and the Easter Vigil at 8:30pm on Facebook Live.*

## Introduction and Preparation

Holy Saturday is a day of solemn anticipation and of hushed and prayerful waiting at the tomb of Christ. We are certain of His resurrection but we dare not shout the joyous *Alleluias* until the Church has rekindled the Light of the World at the evening vigil service.

So the day is one of waiting. The sorrow of Good Friday is replaced by quiet hope, but still we are reserved. There is as yet no time for parties and secular visiting and gaiety. This day before the greatest feast of the whole Church year belongs to Christ. The day offers us a wonderful opportunity for Sabbath, that rhythm set by God in creation of working six days and resting on the seventh. Christ rested in the tomb on the Sabbath and ushered in the New Creation the following day, the first day of the week. Some ideas on how to mark the day are:

1. Sabbath well – inhabit rest: turn off your phone, the TV, and all other electronic distractions in favor of attending to your family, your home, and your neighborhood. Take a walk, journal those things for which you are thankful, and offers prayers to God throughout the day.

*PARENTS NOTE: Many of our children are missing their friends in the midst of school closure, church not gathering, and other implications of sheltering in place. Kids can draw pictures and/or write notes to their friends, expressing their gratitude to God for the good friends and family He has given. Mail these to the friends.*

2. Remember your baptism – the Easter Vigil was the service in which converts were baptized into the church, and as such it is a good time to remember our own baptism. If you have pictures of your baptism, or that of your family members, look at those. Revisit the liturgy for baptism and together renew your baptismal vows. Share with your children the vows you made on their behalf and discuss those together.

*PARENTS NOTE: This activity is especially poignant for our children who were baptized as infants. Tell them the story of their baptism, how you prepared, and what the day was like. Read through the baptismal vows and ask what they think of them. You could even*

*have them re-enact their baptism with a doll in the sink or bathtub.*

3. Prepare an Easter Egg Hunt – the Easter egg remains an excellent home device for the education and the delight of children. The egg is a symbol of the resurrection, of life emerging from the tomb. The older children can help to color the eggs and create Easter symbols, e.g., the chi-rho, lamb, candles, and *alleluias*. Once decorate, store the eggs (in the refrigerator if you're using real eggs) in preparation for hiding them early tomorrow morning.

*PARENTS NOTE: This activity is ready made for our children who love to decorate or do projects. Be sure to explain the symbol of the egg as one of life and resurrection, and the joy of discovering an egg in an unexpected place. Have them plan out where to hide an egg for other members of the family and then allow them to do that on Sunday morning.*

# Easter Sunday

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*Items to mark the day: bells, flowers, eggs, gifts, special meal, celebratory clothing (preferably brightly colored)*

*Holy Spirit Worship: Sunday service at 4pm on Facebook Live*

## Introduction and Preparation

Alleluia! Christ is risen! This call is the center of our hope and joy, even now amid the global pandemic brought about by the Coronavirus. On this day, two thousand years ago, God powerfully demonstrated His victory over death and His commitment to His creation. Easter is a time of great celebration, an emerging from the penitence of Lent with fresh gratitude for God's goodness and love made known to us in Jesus Christ and by the indwelling of His Holy Spirit.

As such, the day of Easter should be full of joy. Our service features lots of 'alleluias', a Greek term meaning 'Praise God!' We ring bells whenever we hear it. The altar is typically decked out with flowers. Our homes can follow this model as well through joyful singing, bell ringing, and decoration. Other ideas for celebrating at home are:

1. Bless your home with joy – Easter brings joy into our lives and our homes can reflect this. Decorate your home with bright colors: new sheets on the bed, a table cloth, and fresh flowers in as many places as possible. Ring bells to share joy, and give gifts to one another. At some point in the day, pray for God's blessing on your home with the following prayer: "Visit, O blessed Lord, this home with the gladness of your presence. Bless all who live here with the gift of your love; and grant that we may manifest your love to each other and to all whose lives we touch. May we grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of you; guide, comfort, and strengthen us; and preserve us in peace, O Jesus Christ, now and for ever. Amen."

*PARENTS NOTE: Invite your kids' creativity as you decorate your home. Follow some of their ideas for decorating. Have them draw or color art to hang up on the walls. Give them a bell and have them ring it whenever they hear an alleluia, either from one of the family members or in the church service.*

2. Share a special meal – Easter is a feast day, and should be accompanied by a feast. Choose foods which bring great joy to your family, have fun preparing them together, and set the table as nice as possible for a sumptuous meal. As you sit down to the meal, you can use this blessing for the food: "Blessed are you, O Lord our God; you have given

us the risen Savior to be the Shepherd of your people: Lead us, by him, to springs of living waters, and feed us with the food that endures to eternal life; where with you, O Father, and with the Holy Spirit, he lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.”

*PARENTS NOTE: Invite the kids to decorate the table for the meal with flowers or art. Sing some Easter songs together before the meal or afterwards. Read the story of the resurrection from the Bible and ask them what about the story makes them happy.*

3. Hold an Easter Egg Hunt – This idea is especially for families with children, but adults can have fun, too! Hide the eggs you’ve prepared around the house and take turns searching for one at a time. Once you’ve collected all of the eggs talk about how they symbolize new life. Read the resurrection account in one of the gospels and discuss the new life Jesus brings to us.