



HOLY SATURDAY: EASTER VIGIL

Church rubrics remind us that this “mother of all vigils” is the “greatest and most noble of all solemnities and is to be unique in every single Church.” It is filled with great symbolism. On this holy night, the Church keeps watch, celebrating the resurrection of Christ in the sacraments and awaiting his return in glory. It is the turning point of the

Triduum, the Passover of the “New Covenant,” making Christ’s passage from death to life.

As a vigil, it begins in darkness. Following the lighting and blessing of the fire, the Paschal candle is the first candle lit with a flame from this sacred fire, representing the light of Christ coming into the world. This “light of Christ” is a symbol of light (life) dispelling darkness (death). With our individual candles still unlit, we are like the children of Israel who were guided at night by the pillar of fire. When we light our candles, we are reminded that Christ has brought this light (life) into each of our lives. The Exsultet, a poetic hymn of praise, is sung by the priest or cantor, as our Easter proclamation. Bells are rung during the Gloria to accentuate our praise to God this night. The blessing of water takes place, and from this water, catechumens are baptized. Candidates to be received into the Catholic Church make their Profession of Faith, and together they all will be fully initiated through the reception of the Sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Communion. All the Faithful relight their individual candles as they renew their baptismal promises (instead of reciting the Creed). All are sprinkled with this same blessed water as a reminder of our own baptism, and the washing away of sin. The Liturgy of the Eucharist then takes place. The Mass ends with a solemn blessing, followed by a special Easter proclamation.

Reflection:

Imagine yourself being there to witness Christ’s resurrection.

Relive your baptism in your mind. What does it mean for you to be washed clean by the Waters of Baptism?

Can I make the pledge to grow deeper into the Paschal Mystery, and live and share the joy of a new life with Christ?

THE EASTER TRIDUUM



Holy Thursday

Good Friday

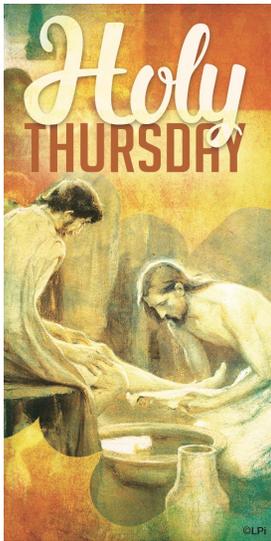
Easter Vigil

How can I share in the Paschal Mystery?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, *During his earthly life Jesus announced his Paschal mystery by his teaching and anticipated it by his actions. When his Hour comes, he lives out the unique event of history which does not pass away: Jesus dies, is buried, rises from the dead, and is seated at the right hand of the Father “once for all.” His Paschal mystery is a real event that occurred in our history, but it is unique: **all other historical events happen once, and then they pass away, swallowed up in the past. The Paschal mystery of Christ, by contrast, cannot remain only in the past, because by his death he destroyed death, and all that Christ is—all that he did and suffered for all men—participates in the divine eternity, and so transcends all times while being made present in them all.***

[USCCB site; #1085. Christ’s Work in the Liturgy]

May God’s deep love burn within us as we share in this year’s Easter Triduum. Come, let us journey together...



HOLY THURSDAY: MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Holy Thursday focuses on two key aspects of our Faith:

The Holy Eucharist and Service

The readings of Holy Thursday begin with the Lord telling Moses and Aaron that his people should celebrate the Passover every year: *"This day shall be a memorial feast for you, which all your generations shall celebrate...as a perpetual institution."* (Exodus 12:14)

The second reading used this day refers to the Last Supper—the very first celebration of the Mass, when we hear how Jesus broke the bread for his disciples. He proclaimed, *"This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."* (1 Cor. 11:24b) With the cup of wine, Jesus proclaimed, *"This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes."* (1 Cor 11:25-26)

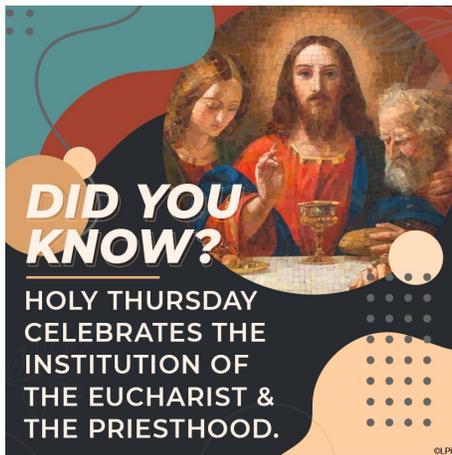
In the Gospel, Jesus explains his purpose in coming: to serve. By washing the feet of his disciples, He is establishing the role for all leaders of the Church. It is symbolic that twelve people would come forward for the Washing of the Feet by the priest, reminding us of the twelve disciples who were called by Jesus to have their feet washed by him. We in turn, should seek to follow his example of servitude in our own lives.

Reflection: Be one of the disciples with Jesus this night.

What does it feel like to have Jesus wash my feet?

Is receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus today as real to me as it was at that First Eucharist?

What service is Jesus calling me to today?



GOOD FRIDAY: CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S PASSION

Good Friday is an especially important day of fasting. Although we fast for a number of reasons, fasting on Good Friday is a good penance, a good discipline to show our appreciation for the great sacrifice of Christ this day. The entire day should be focused on Christ's passion—his suffering, which we read at today's liturgy. Jesus did not just suffer on the cross; his suffering started much earlier that day. Judas betrayed him. Peter betrayed him. His intense prayers in the Garden caused him to sweat blood (Lk 22:44), foreshadowing the shedding of his blood on the cross. He was scourged, crowned with thorns, ridiculed and spit upon. He dragged the heavy cross to his final destiny. He was stripped of his garments, nailed to the cross, and suffered beyond our imagination. He became so numbed by every physical, spiritual and emotional suffering. Only his final surrender—death on the cross—would alleviate his pain, and fulfill the Father's request to save mankind. What wondrous love is this, O my soul?

Good Friday is the ONLY day of the year that Mass is not celebrated in the Church. We mourn the lack of Christ's presence this day. Even the presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist in the tabernacle is removed from the church. In this liturgy, we totally experience what a separation from Christ means for us this day. It should cause us to ponder what an eternal separation from Christ would mean for us, had He not died for us. At the Good Friday liturgy, we venerate the cross—a very personal moment when we stand before the cross that Christ embraced. We are reminded that it was our sins that brought this suffering and death. The priest then leads the ten Solemn Intercessions which are prayed in the Church throughout the world today.

Reflection: Be an onlooker of that first Good Friday. Ponder on your experience of being separated from Christ. Am I willing to sacrifice for others? Am I willing to surrender all within me that caused the suffering and death of Christ?

