

# TRIDUUM

## THE PASSOVER OF OUR LORD

The Paschal Triduum, or “Three Days,” is the most solemn event of the Christian year. Beginning on the evening of Holy Thursday and closing with Evening Prayer on Easter Sunday, these three days celebrate Christ’s passage through death to new life.

Early Christians celebrated only the Easter Vigil, concluding with a Mass at dawn at which the catechumens were baptized. By the fifth century, the events of Easter were commemorated as units, and there emerged an Easter Triduum of Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter. Later, Holy Thursday evening was added because the “days” were reckoned from sundown the day before.

The celebration of each day revolves around a central liturgical action: the Washing of the Feet, The Adoration of the Cross, the Baptism of the Catechumens.

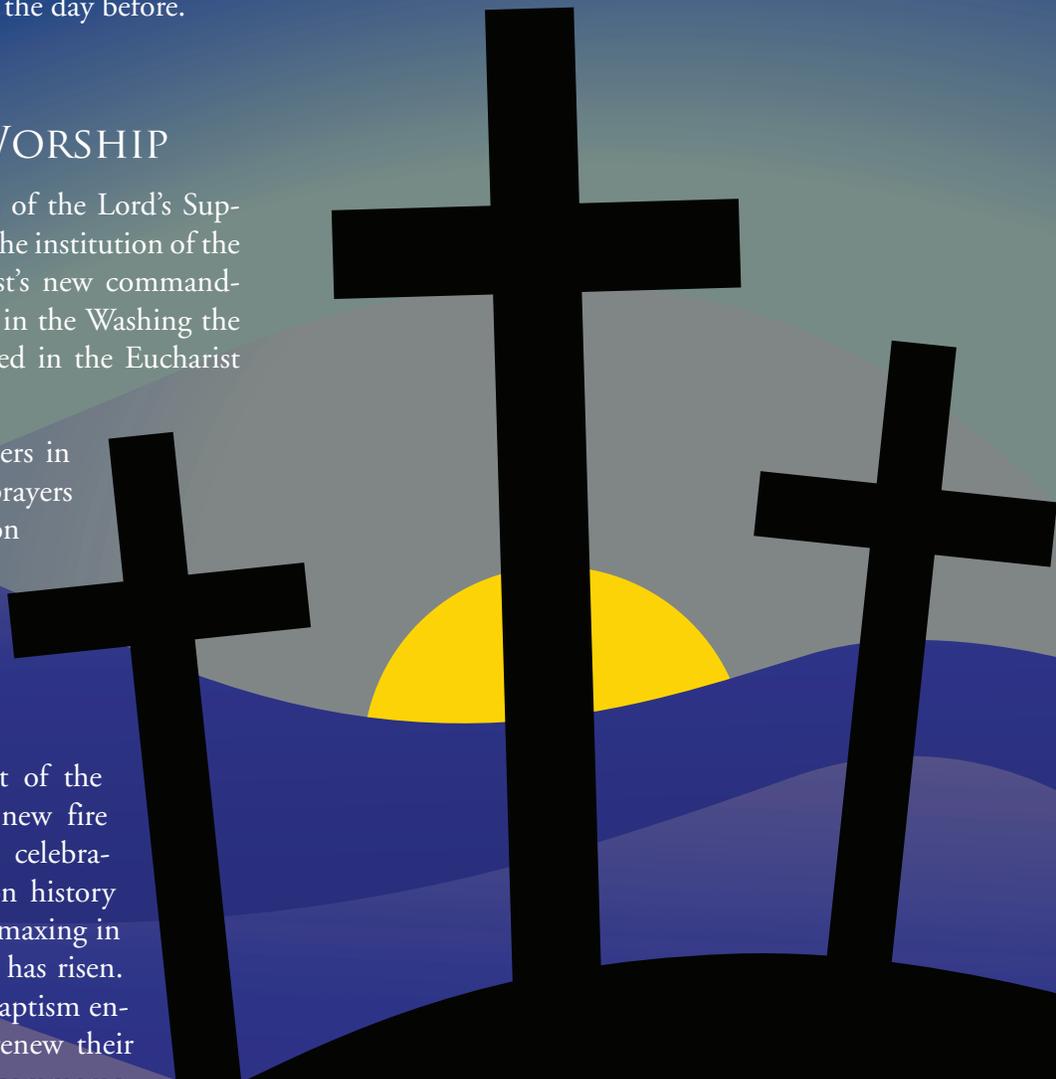
The centerpiece of the Church’s entire liturgical year is the Easter Vigil. Beginning with the blessing of the new fire and the light ceremony, the Vigil recounts our salvation history in an extended liturgy of the Word. Baptism and the renewal of our baptismal promises prepare us to receive the Eucharist with new hearts. The Paschal Triduum concludes with Evening Prayer on Easter Sunday, and the 50-day Easter Season begins.

### THREE DAYS OF WORSHIP

**Holy Thursday** celebrates the Mass of the Lord’s Supper in the evening, commemorating the institution of the Eucharist and the priesthood. Christ’s new commandment to love one another is recalled in the Washing the Feet. That love becomes fully realized in the Eucharist and Christ’s sacrifice on Calvary.

On **Good Friday**, the Church gathers in silence to read Scripture and offer prayers for the whole world. The Veneration of the Cross takes place not simply to mourn Jesus’ suffering and death but to acknowledge that through the cross of Jesus we are led to glory.

The **Easter Vigil** is the high point of the entire Church liturgical year. The new fire is blessed and candles glow in the celebration of Christ as our light. Salvation history is proclaimed through Scriptures, climaxing in the joyous proclamation that Christ has risen. Those who have been prepared for baptism enter the Church, and all Catholics renew their baptismal promises, for this night commemorates our share in the dying and rising of Jesus.



## TERMS AND CUSTOMS OF THE TRIDUUM

**Fasting** throughout the Triduum or for 40 hours before Easter sunrise was a tradition in the first centuries of the Church.

**The Mass of the Lord's Supper** is celebrated on the evening of Holy Thursday inaugurating the Easter Triduum and commemorating the Last Supper of Jesus with his disciples. Many parishes reenact the washing of the disciples' feet during this Mass as well.

**Mandatum** is the Latin word for commandment (referring to Christ's command that we love one another given to his followers at the Last Supper.) Holy Thursday is sometimes called "Maundy Thursday" because of the *mandatum*.

The **Stripping of the Altar** occurs at the end of Mass on Holy Thursday. All the altar coverings are removed, symbolizing the fact that Christ was stripped of his garments upon his arrest.

The **Veneration of the Cross** is part of the liturgy on Good Friday. The clergy and congregation approach a cross or crucifix one by one, and offer a gesture of respect by either bowing or kneeling and reverently kissing the crucifix.

The **Service of Light** takes place at the beginning of the Easter Vigil. The new fire and the paschal candle are blessed, the candle is lit and all light their candles from it. Honoring Christ as the light of the world, it concludes with the singing of the *Exsultet*, the Easter proclamation.

The **Easter Vigil Readings** follow the story of salvation from God's creation of the world, the sparing of Noah and his family from the flood and the deliverance of God's people from Egypt to the Gospel accounts of Jesus rising from the grave.

A **Catechumen** is one who is learning about Christianity in preparation for formal entry into the Church.

**Evening Prayer** is part of the Liturgy of the Hours, the official public prayer of the Church comprised of hymns, psalms, spiritual and biblical readings, and prayers. Evening Prayer on Easter Sunday concludes the Paschal Triduum.

## EASTER VIGIL & BAPTISM

From the days of the early Church the Easter Vigil has been the time for adult converts to be baptized and enter the Church. The Easter Vigil consists of four general parts: the Service of Light, the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of Baptism, and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. After the conclusion of the Liturgy of the Word, catechumens (those who have never been baptized) and candidates (those who have been baptized in a non-Catholic Christian denomination) are initiated into the Church respectively by baptism and confirmation. The faithful are sprinkled with holy water and renew their baptismal vows. Then all adult candidates are confirmed and general intercessions are stated. The Easter Vigil concludes with the Liturgy of the Eucharist and the reception of Holy Communion.



### TRIDUUM PRAYER

Almighty God, you gather your Church  
in solemn celebration of the mystery of our Redemption.  
Open our hearts and minds as we remember the dying  
and the rising of Jesus so that we may appreciate  
more deeply the mystery of our own baptism.  
May these days remind us that we are not alone  
in our suffering nor without hope.  
May the joy we share strengthen us  
to be witnesses of the Gospel throughout the year.  
We ask this in the name of your Son and our Lord,  
Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

### MASS READINGS 2020

**Holy Thursday** • Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14;  
1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-15

**Good Friday** • Isaiah 52:13—53:12;  
Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9;  
John 18:1—19:42

**Holy Saturday** • Genesis 1:1—2:2;  
Genesis 22:1-18; Exodus 14:15—15:1;  
Isaiah 54:5-14; Isaiah 55:1-11;  
Baruch 3:9-15, 32—4:4;  
Ezekiel 36:16-17a, 18-28;  
Romans 6:3-11; Matthew 28:1-10