

Holy week begins with Palm Sunday. During the week leading up to Easter, Lent reaches its dramatic climax as we remember and re-enact the story of Jesus' suffering and death, or what we call his Passion. Here's what to expect and what to look for.

Palm Sunday

Holy Week kicks off with Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord. First, we hear about Jesus' king-like entry into the holy city of Jerusalem... on a donkey? Not a very kingly way to ride, but that's Jesus' point: he is a new King of Kings, the King of Peace foretold by the prophets. Then we hear a long reading about the Last Supper and Jesus' Passion.

LOOK FOR:

- Two Gospel readings – one before Mass.
- Palms, a symbol of victory.
- We hear the Passion from the Gospel of Luke.

Holy Thursday

Holy Thursday begins the Triduum, a single liturgy that lasts three days! Tonight, we celebrate the institution of the Eucharist – but instead of hearing about Jesus blessing the bread and wine, we hear about him washing the feet of his disciples. What does this tell us about the Eucharist?

LOOK FOR:

- The oils your parish will use for the sacraments.
- The priest washing peoples' feet.
- A collection for the poor.
- Stripping of the altar, a Eucharistic procession, and adoration.

Good Friday

Good Friday is all about the Passion. On Palm Sunday we read the Passion according to Luke; on Good Friday, we hear the Passion according to John, just like on Palm Sunday, we have a part to play: We are the "crowd," the ones who shout things like "Crucify him!" Do you find it hard to say that? Why is that our part?

LOOK FOR:

- A SILENT START, WITH THE PRIEST PROSTRATE ON THE FLOOR.
- Many prayers for the whole world.
- Veneration of the cross.
- No consecration of the host or Liturgy of the Eucharist.
- Stripping the altar.

Easter Vigil

This Saturday night Mass concludes the Triduum and begins Easter with a bang. It's the night that we move from the darkness of the tomb to the bright light of the Resurrection. It's also the night that adults enter the Church.

LOOK FOR:

- The Paschal ("Easter") fire outside the church.
- The procession of the Paschal Candle through the church.
- Singing of the ancient Exsultet hymn.
- Between 5 and 9 readings, with sung psalms in between.
- Blessing of the baptismal waters.
- Baptism, First Communion, and Confirmation for new Catholics.