


The Traditional Events of Holy Week

The passion of Jesus—his suffering, death, and resurrection—stands at the literary and theological center of all four Gospels. These events formed the core of the early church's faith, shaping how believers identified with Jesus. His final days were not only remembered but reenacted, becoming the heartbeat of Christian worship. From the earliest gatherings to today, Holy Week remains the most vivid retelling of the Gospel story.

Holy Week unfolds day by day, tracing Jesus' steps from triumph to betrayal, from suffering to silence, from death to life. The church has long marked this journey through Scripture, prayer, and worship, drawing believers deeper into the mystery of Christ's sacrifice and victory. Below is a guide to the traditional rhythm of the week.

Palm Sunday – The Triumphal Entry

 *Matthew 21:1–11; Mark 11:1–11; Luke 19:28–40; John 12:12–19*

Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey, fulfilling prophecy. The people wave palm branches, crying *Hosanna!*, expecting a triumphant ruler. Yet he comes not as a conqueror but as a servant. The crowd welcomes a king, expecting power, but Jesus refuses to seize it. By week's end, the same voices shouting *Hosanna* will cry, *Crucify him*.

Many churches mark this day with palm processions, a moment of joy that quickly turns somber as we look toward the cross and ask:

How does Jesus' way of salvation challenge our expectations?

Holy Monday – The Cleansing of the Temple

 *Matthew 21:12–20; Mark 11:12–19; Luke 19:45–48*

Jesus overturns the money changers' tables, driving them from the temple. His righteous anger exposes worship distorted by greed. Some churches observe this day with prayers of confession or acts of cleansing, symbolizing the need to clear away what keeps us from true devotion.

What must be overturned for God's presence to dwell in us?


Holy Tuesday – Jesus' Final Teachings in the Temple

 *Matthew 21–25; Mark 11:20–13:37; Luke 20–21*

Jesus engages with the religious leaders and speaks of God's reign breaking into the world. His parables call for faithfulness and readiness. Some communities reflect on this day with readings of Jesus' final parables or a service of teaching, asking:

Are we truly awake to God's reign among us?

Holy Wednesday (“Spy Wednesday”) – Judas’ Betrayal and the Anointing at Bethany

 *Matthew 26:6–16; Mark 14:1–11; Luke 22:1–6; John 12:1–8*

Judas arranges to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, while a woman anoints Jesus with costly perfume. One holds back, the other pours out. The contrast is striking. As night falls, Jesus gathers his disciples for a final meal, where another act of costly love will unfold.


Some churches mark this day with anointing services, a tangible sign of preparing our hearts for what is to come.

What do we withhold, and what do we lavish on Christ?

The Paschal Triduum – Three Days That Change Everything

From Thursday night to Easter morning, the *Paschal Triduum* (“Three Days of Passover”) unfolds as a single, continuous act of worship. Time slows. We move from the upper room to the cross, from the grave to the dawn of resurrection. These days are not separate moments but one great act of God, carrying the church from sorrow and silence into the joy of new life.


Maundy Thursday – The Last Supper and Foot Washing

 *Matthew 26:17–30; Mark 14:12–26; Luke 22:7–38; John 13:1–17*

Jesus kneels to wash his disciples’ feet. He breaks bread and pours wine, giving himself away. *Do this in remembrance of me.* Many churches gather for the Lord’s Supper and foot washing, reenacting Jesus’ humility. The service often ends in silence as the altar is stripped, candles snuffed and cloths removed, symbolizing Jesus’ abandonment.

What does it mean to serve as Jesus serves?

Good Friday – The Crucifixion


 *Matthew 26:47–27:66; Mark 14:43–15:47; Luke 22:47–23:56; John 18–19*

The world goes dark. Jesus is crucified. He breathes his last. The crowds disperse, the tomb is sealed, and silence settles over the earth. Hope feels lost.

Many congregations hold *Tenebrae* services, where candles are extinguished one by one, leaving the congregation in darkness. Others venerate the cross, kneeling in sorrow and gratitude. Some remain in silent prayer through the afternoon hours when Jesus died.

Where do we find ourselves in this story—at the foot of the cross, among the crowd, or waiting in the silence?

Holy Saturday – The Silence of the Tomb


 *Matthew 27:57–66; Mark 15:42–47; Luke 23:50–56; John 19:38–42*

Jesus lies in the grave. The disciples hide, afraid. Holy Saturday invites us to dwell in the in-between, the space where grief and hope meet.

In the early church, new believers were baptized on this night, entering the waters as one life ended and another began. The Easter Vigil, still observed in many traditions, begins in darkness. The first flicker of light comes as the Paschal candle is lit, and Scripture tells the story of salvation.

How might our waiting be not just a pause, but a transformation?

Easter Sunday – The Resurrection

 *Matthew 28:1–10; Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–12; John 20:1–18*

Before dawn, the women go to the tomb. The stone is rolled away. *He is not here; he is risen!* The silence of Good Friday is shattered. The fast of Lent is broken. The world is flooded with light.

In the early church, Easter began in the night. The Easter Vigil started in complete darkness, waiting for resurrection light. The Paschal candle was lit, Scripture told the story of salvation, and new believers were baptized—descending into water, rising into new life. As dawn approached, the first Easter proclamation rang out: “*Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!*”

Many churches today begin Easter morning with a Sunrise Service, recalling how the first witnesses encountered the empty tomb. In some traditions, the Easter Vigil continues into the dawn, with baptisms and the ringing of bells. The Paschal candle is carried into the church, and the long-awaited word returns—*Alleluia! (Praise God!)*

Christ is risen, and resurrection changes everything—not just for us, but for all creation. The world is not the same. Death is not the final word.

The Spirit, the very breath of God, is the power that raised Jesus from the dead and now moves in us, making all things new.

How does resurrection call us to live—bringing life where there is brokenness, justice where there is oppression, hope where there is despair?

The Journey of Holy Week

This is the road we walk in Holy Week. From palms to passion, from cross to empty tomb, from death to life, this is the story that defines our faith, our worship, and our hope.

So read. Pray. Watch. Wait. Enter the mystery. Be changed.