

# 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.

