

THE PASCHAL TRIDUUM

The mission of Jesus Christ to the world is to suffer and die in atonement for our sins and rise up victoriously. This offering of Jesus, as a lamb, to suffer, die and rise from the dead is what is referred to as **Paschal Mystery**. This sacrifice Jesus made of himself reached its peak in three of the days of the **Holy Week**. Those three days within the Holy Week during which this took place are together called in the church's language as *The Sacred Paschal Triduum*. The Holy Week starts from the Palm Sunday – the day we recall the triumphant entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem to accomplish his Paschal Mystery – and ends on the Holy Saturday night – the Resurrection Day.

The Thursday, Friday and Saturday within the Holy Week are the days of the paschal events/activities. The holy and unique activities that took place in those three days have merited them special names. They are specially called **Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday** and together called the *Sacred Paschal Triduum* (simply, *Triduum*). The Holy Triduum then refers to **one mass that is celebrated within a span of three days**.

Holy Thursday

On this day two separate masses are said. The first of the masses is the **Chrism Mass**, to be said in the morning. Chrism mass is the mass that the bishop have with the priests and religious in the diocese. In this mass the oil of the sick and the oil of catechumens are blessed and the Chrism consecrated by the bishop. Priests also renew their vows in this mass. For pastoral reasons, this mass may be said on a different day prior to this day.

The second of the masses is the **Mass of the Lord's Supper**, which actually begins the Holy Triduum. This mass is celebrated in the evening of this day with full participation of the congregation, ministers and the priest(s). This mass has some unique features we are going to look at.

- This mass commemorates the institution of the sacrament of Holy Orders and the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist (*the first Eucharistic celebration by Jesus himself – the unbloody sacrifice*).
- In this mass *Gloria* (which has been suspended in lent) is joyfully sang amid ringing of church and sanctuary bells. After the gloria is sang, all musical instruments and accompaniments are suspended until the day of the resurrection.
- Also peculiar to this mass is the washing of feet. The priest washes the feet of twelve selected members in the church. Jesus did this to give us an example of service and humility (*If I, your Lord and Master, deigned to wash your feet, you should do the same and wash each other's feet*).
- At the end of this mass the priest does not bless and or dismiss the people. The reason being that the mass is not ended. It will be continued the following day (remember *Triduum = one mass celebrated within a span of three days*).
- The Holy Communion is then transferred to a prepared place (repository altar) where adoration of the sacrament is carried out until some few minutes to midnight.
- The alter is stripped bare, the crosses and statues are removed or veiled and the tabernacle is left opened to indicate Jesus (communion) is not in there.
- The church from this time enters into deep silence reflecting on Christ's suffering with sorrow.

Good Friday

Good Friday commemorates the celebration of the **Lord's passion (the bloody sacrifice)**. This service is the continuation of the mass we began yesterday, Holy Thursday. This service has three main parts:

- *Service of the word* – This consist of the two readings plus the passion reading. This section ends with ten solemn intersections where we kneel and stand during each prayer.
- *Veneration of the Cross* – this is the time the cross is brought in a solemn procession to the church for veneration. During this procession the cross is unveiled gradually and proclaimed and venerated three times before it gets to the sanctuary. After the third proclamation the cross is laid for veneration by all.
- *Communion Service* – the bare alter at this time is covered with cloth and corporal for the communion service. The communion is brought back from where we kept it in a quiet solemn procession. The communion service takes place at this time and the faithful receive communion. At the end of the service the rest of the communion is taken back and the alter cloth and the corporal are removed.

Once again, the priest will not bless the people nor dismiss them but will pray over them and all leave in silence awaiting the resurrection. Remember that the one mass we began on the Holy Thursday is not done yet and this is the second day.

Holy Saturday

On this day (2nd day of the Triduum), the church waits at the Lord's tomb in prayer and fasting, meditating on his passion and death and on his descent into hell, and awaiting on his Resurrection. The church abstains from the mass (the mass we began on Holy Thursday is still not done), with the alter still bare until the night of the Saturday (which is considered Sunday per the Jewish calculation of days). On this night the church celebrates the **Resurrection of the Lord** which come with paschal joys, the abundance of which overflows to occupy fifty days. This Holy Saturday night service is in four parts:

- *The Service of light (Lucernarium)* – This involves the blessing of fire, preparation of the Paschal Candle, candle procession to the church amid the proclamation of **Christ our Light** and the Easter proclamation (Exultet). The lights in the church are all put out during this service until the third and last proclamation of Christ our Light. This signifies that Christ, the Light of the world (which was extinguished) is risen and has brought light back to the world.
- *Liturgy of the Word* – Here the church listens to nine readings reiterating the history of salvation. In the cause of it the suspended alleluia is intoned, the suspended Gloria is sung amid the ringing of bells and the alter candles and lit (all at different times). This part ends with the homily.
- *Baptismal Liturgy* – Now the rites of Christian initiations take place (if any) otherwise, the blessing of water and the renewal of baptismal promises and sprinkling of holy water take place.
- *The Liturgy of the Eucharist* – The celebration of the Eucharist takes place.

At the end of the mass, the priest blesses us and we are dismissed with joys of alleluia.