

Holy Week 2026

Every time we gather at Mass, we celebrate the Paschal Mystery, that is the life, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this Holy Week, we do this in a deliberate and fine-tuned way. We begin by waving palms commemorating Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the focus and center of his entire ministry for all unfolds here. We read Matthew's version of the passion which focuses on Jesus' human suffering and all the events surrounding this as prophetic fulfillment. John's Passion, which we read on Good Friday, is more theological, showing a triumphant view of the divine with Jesus in control of his destiny. In between, we have "Spy Wednesday" when the Gospel for the day details Judas' agreeing to "hand over" or betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Holy Thursday begins the Triduum, the three most special days, of Holy Week. This is the day Jesus instituted the Eucharist in their celebration of Passover. He breaks bread and offers wine making them his body and blood commanding us to "do this in memory of him," so we may be reminded of who we are and always give thanks. Gathering to celebrate the Eucharist is what Ronald Rolheiser calls "our greatest act of fidelity." We become what we eat as we have Jesus within us, "food for the journey" accompanying us in all we do. But this evening's Gospel picks up after the meal and centers on foot washing love and our need to allow Christ to wash us of what separates us from him and others. He begs of us to do as he does accepting this universal call to serve others. Jesus, master and teacher, demonstrates the humility we all need, dying to self to do for others as he tells us, "I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do." Humility and love for others is on full display on Mt. Calvary or the Mount of Lovers as St. Francis de Sales calls it. "No greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends." This cross is a scandal for the world but our victory from sin to a life of freedom and grace. There is no more recognizable symbol in the world, regardless of faith or no faith, than the cross. We embrace our cross daily in imitation of Jesus. I guess if the story ended here the cross might be a scandal, a defeat, but God resurrecting his only Son on Easter morn leads to the victory over the grave, the institution of the Church, and our role as missionary disciples to evangelize the world.

Regardless of what kind of Lent we have been experiencing, now is the time to let the events of this Holy Week speak to us. Maybe we recall times when we have betrayed or denied Christ. Perhaps we recognize ourselves in Pilate for times when we wash our hands of speaking the truth so as to avoid a reaction in taking a stand. Do we think about how we ought to give Christ a crown of fidelity rather than thorns? Are we reluctant to help carry another's cross as they are weighed down as did Simon? Have we given comfort to one's suffering as Veronica did washing Jesus' face? Do we sense our obedience in receiving the Eucharist and solemnly appreciate the guest we have received, so as to live better? Can we have the compassion for what people carry especially Mary's helplessness in being able to alleviate her son's suffering but knowing clearly this is God's will that puts an end to sin and death? Can we gently hold the dead body of Christ in the loving embrace Mary did depicted by Michelangelo's Pieta? Can we hold reverently the silence of Holy Saturday morning patiently waiting for the ultimate celebration of our faith, the Resurrection?

I fervently pray that all parishioners may be blessed by the paschal mysteries we celebrate this week. May a personality in the readings, some part of a celebration, an inspirational hymn, a little sacred silence, the adoration of the cross, anything moves you to know how infinitely loved you are this is our Holy Week. Let us celebrate it well with love and devotion.

~John Fisher, OSFS