

The Holiest of Weeks

By Julianne Will

WHAT IS THE TRIDUUM?

The Triduum is its own short liturgical season. Lent officially ends before the Mass of the Lord's Supper, held in the evening on Holy Thursday. The Triduum begins then and goes through the Evening Prayer on Easter Sunday. It is three days — beginning on April 2 this year — when the Church tells the story of Jesus's last days, his death and his rising from the dead.



HOLY THURSDAY

During Mass on Holy Thursday, we get a peek into what it was like at the Last Supper, when Jesus said goodbye to his apostles. He teaches them to eat bread and drink wine in memory of him, and he tells them that the bread and wine will be his body and blood. Jesus also washes the apostles' feet at the Last Supper, showing them how much he loved them and how they should serve others. The washing of feet often occurs during this Mass.



GOOD FRIDAY

On Good Friday, we read the Gospel that describes how Jesus carried the cross, suffering and dying for our sins. This is called the Passion. We offer prayers for people in our community and our world during this service. We also show our respect to, and love for, the cross and Jesus' sacrifice. Some people kiss the cross, some people kneel in front of it, and some people touch it. Good Friday services are very serious and quiet; we think about the big sacrifice that God made by sending his Son to die for us.



HOLY SATURDAY

Holy Saturday is a day of waiting. Jesus is in the tomb. The apostles are hiding, afraid. We wait with prayer and hope, knowing that Jesus will leave the tomb on Easter, and that he will come again someday. Some people attend the Easter Vigil, a beautiful service that begins after dark and includes lots of readings and songs. We light a new candle at the Easter Vigil, symbolizing Jesus as the Light of the World. The people who are joining the Catholic Church are baptized at the Easter Vigil. And for the first time since Lent began, we can say "Alleluia" again!



EASTER SUNDAY

Some people think that Christmas is the most important day of the year. But that's just the beginning of everything, with Jesus' birth. The biggest day of the year for Christians is Easter! Easter Sunday is a day of joy. At Mass we read about how Jesus rose from the dead. Bells ring out, Easter lilies bloom, families share meals, and we sing "Alleluia," which means "Praise God!" We are very happy that Jesus' death has made it possible for us to enter heaven.



FAMILY FAITH DISCUSSION STARTERS

During the Triduum, we enter into the experience of Christ's dying and rising, and we think about our own lives:

- Running away would have been much easier than dying on the cross, but Jesus knew that he had to do what God asked of him. How do you try to do the right thing, even when it might be easier to do the wrong thing?
- Are you living in a way that honors Jesus' big sacrifice on the cross? When you think about your day, can you say, "Yes, Jesus would be proud of me today"?
- God's forgiveness and grace are a beautiful gift! Do you celebrate this gift in your life? In what ways? And do you show others grace?



MARKING THE TRIDUUM AT HOME

■ Help your children bake a loaf of bread to share at supper on Holy Thursday. At dinner, read Matthew 26:17-30 and talk about what it must have felt like to be at the Last Supper.



■ On Good Friday, pray the Stations of the Cross together as a family at home. "The Stations of the Cross for Children," available from Our Sunday Visitor, offers a child-appropriate version of the Passion. Allow your children to act out scenes from the Passion if they choose and talk about how Jesus, Mary and the apostles may have felt.

■ On Holy Saturday, help your children create crosses. Search the yard for small, somewhat straight sticks that can be broken or cut into pieces approximately 5 inches and 3 inches long. For each cross, loop together a short stick with a longer stick using dental floss and tie it off. These can be used as place settings at your Easter meal.



■ On Easter Sunday, celebrate the light of Christ's resurrection by lighting a large, white pillar candle on your kitchen or dining room table.

■ Place a small holy water dispenser in your home and bring home a vial of holy water from your parish's baptismal font so that your family can remember the blessings of baptism, forgiveness and Easter every day!

