

GROW IN YOUR FAITH

For the next few weeks, we will forgo the Saint of the Day and the Catholic Q&A to discuss the most sacred week in the liturgical year, Holy Week.



Holy week begins with Palm Sunday. It's the final Sunday of Lent and the beginning of Holy Week. It marks Jesus' arrival into Jerusalem, to shouts of "Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" Welcomers waved palm branches as he rode into the city on a young donkey. Palms are a symbol of peace and victory. The Catholic tradition is to distribute blessed palms to all Mass goers in memory of Christ's ride into Jerusalem. His riding a donkey into the city also symbolized peace, which would have been widely understood by the residents of Jerusalem. By riding the donkey on a path paved with palms, He fulfilled the prophecy laid out in Zachariah 9:9: "Behold: your king is coming to you, a just savior is he, humble, and riding on a donkey".

We then begin the Sacred Triduum on Holy Thursday. The Sacred Triduum, comprised of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday, are the three most sacred days in the church year, and together makes up one Liturgy, beginning with Mass on Holy Thursday, and concluding with the great celebration at the Easter Vigil late on Saturday. Holy Thursday commemorates the Last Supper and the institution of the priesthood by Jesus. On that day, Jesus and his apostles celebrated the Jewish Passover.



The Gospel of Matthew gives us the following account:

Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the passover?" He said, "Go into the city to a certain one, and say to him, "The Teacher says, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at your house with my disciples." And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the passover. (Mt 26:17-19) Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins". Mt 26:26-29

Jesus Christ celebrated the first Mass. Anyone who has been to Mass will recognize these words as the ones used to develop the Eucharist Prayer, where the priest prays over the bread and wine, consecrating them. They truly become the body and blood of Christ. And we consume His flesh, as He commanded. The Sacrament of Holy Communion has been celebrated ever since, daily, around the world.

Jesus also established the ministerial priesthood, distinct from the universal priesthood of all believers, at the Passover. (All Christians have been made priests upon their baptism, for Peter says "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" in 1 Peter 2:9. But the ministerial priesthood is special, and constitutes the Sacrament of Holy Orders). Before eating the Passover meal, Christ washed the feet of his Apostles, who would become the first priests. This was a highly symbolic act. In the OT, the high priest undresses, bathes, dresses, and offers sacrifice, just as Jesus is doing here.

After the Passover meal, Jesus went to Gethsemane to pray. He prayed that he might be spared the pain ahead, but told His Father that he would do His Will, even if it meant immense pain, suffering, and even death. It was here he was arrested, having been betrayed by Judas for 30 pieces of silver.

Saint Ursula will celebrate the Mass of the Lord's Supper at 7pm on Thursday, April 18th, after which we will offer Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament until 10pm. We hope everyone is able to attend this beautiful liturgy.