

# What Is Triduum?

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**Directions:** Read about Triduum. Then answer the questions.

## What is Triduum?

Triduum is the shortest season of the liturgical year – a total of three days! In fact, the word Triduum is Latin for “the three days.” It is the most solemn season and the highest point of the entire liturgical year. During the three days of Triduum we remember and celebrate the events that won our very salvation.

Triduum begins with the evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday, and ends with Evening Prayer on Easter Sunday. It includes the Celebration of the Lord’s Passion and Adoration of the Holy Cross on Good Friday, the Easter Vigil in the evening of Holy Saturday, and the celebration of Mass on Easter Sunday. Even though there is a lot going on during Triduum, in reality, everything from the beginning of Mass on Holy Thursday evening to the end of Mass at the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday night makes up one single liturgical celebration.

## Holy Thursday

On Holy Thursday we celebrate the origin of two Sacraments. During the Last Supper Jesus instituted the Eucharist. For the first time, Jesus took ordinary bread and wine and changed them into His true Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. It is also at the Last Supper that Jesus made His Apostles the first priests. He gave them the authority to celebrate the Eucharist when He said “do this in memory of me.” During the Last Supper Jesus also washed the feet of the Apostles, giving them an example

of humble service to follow in their own ministry.

We honor both of these Sacraments during the Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday evening, which marks the beginning of Triduum. During this Mass the bishop or priest washes the feet of twelve people from the congregation. This symbolizes Jesus washing the feet of His Apostles. We recall in a special way institution of the Eucharist during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. At the end of the Mass, the bishop or priest does not offer the usual concluding blessing. Instead, the faithful are invited to stay and worship our Lord in the Eucharist during Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, which lasts into the night. A concluding blessing will not be offered again until the end of the Easter Vigil, signifying the one liturgical celebration that extends throughout Triduum.

Also of importance, earlier in the day on Holy Thursday, every local bishop celebrates a special Mass with the priests of his diocese to honor the institution of the priesthood. At that Mass, the bishop will bless all of the chrism oil for the next year. This holy oil will be used in the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Anointing of the Sick in every parish throughout the diocese.

## Good Friday and Holy Saturday

Good Friday is the one day in the entire year that no Masses are offered anywhere in the

world. Instead, we focus our attention on the remembrance of Christ's suffering and death on the Cross. It was on Good Friday nearly two-thousand years ago that Jesus was put on trial, sentenced to death, beaten and flogged, made to carry His own cross, stripped of His clothing, nailed to the cross, and freely gave His life for the salvation of all souls.

The main liturgy on Good Friday is the Celebration of the Lord's Passion. While not a Mass, this liturgy includes a Liturgy of the Word, adoration of the Cross, and a communion service with hosts that were consecrated at the Holy Thursday Mass. Adoration, or veneration, of the Cross is a unique form of Catholic devotion. The faithful approach the altar where a cross has been placed (or where an extraordinary minister stands holding a cross), and perform some act of reverence, usually kissing the foot of the cross.

From the end of the Celebration of the Lord's Passion, typically around 3 PM, the time that Jesus died, through Holy Saturday, there are no more liturgical celebrations until the Easter Vigil. Our Lord's body has been placed in the tomb and He has descended to the dead. As a Church, we are at the Lord's tomb. During this time, we meditate on the events of Christ's Passion and Death, and we await His Resurrection, just as the Apostles, Mary Magdalene, and His mother Mary did two thousand years ago.

## **The Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday**

The Church's memorial and celebration of the events of our salvation during Triduum reaches its peak at the Easter Vigil. Taking place at nightfall on the evening of Holy Saturday, the Easter Vigil marks the beginning of Easter. The Vigil begins with a Service of Light. Typically, the Church is completely dark. The priest lights



*Christ Carrying His Cross Artist Unknown*

and blesses a fire outside of the Church and a new Paschal Candle is presented, blessed, and lit from the flame. The lit Paschal Candle is then processed into the Church as other candles are lit from this one flame, brightening the once dark Church. This light represents Jesus, who is the Light of the World, returning to life.

The Easter Vigil continues with a Liturgy of the Word. Up to nine readings are proclaimed that recount God's saving actions throughout Salvation History. We also sing once again the Gloria and the Alleluia, joyful songs of praise to God that we have refrained from singing throughout Lent.

Then, those who have been preparing to enter into the Catholic Church and receive full communion with the Church receive the

Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. This great and joyful moment culminates with a sprinkling rite in which the entire congregation is blessed with holy water and renews their baptismal promises. The Mass then continues with the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Throughout, we pray special prayers recalling and joyously celebrating all of Christ's saving acts and His triumphant Resurrection from the dead.

The Vigil concludes with an antiphon that we repeat at the end of every Mass throughout the Easter season:

Celebrant: The Mass is ended, go in peace, alleluia, alleluia.

Congregation: Thanks be to God, alleluia, alleluia.

The Easter Sunday Masses continue the joyful celebration of Jesus' Resurrection. Easter is not a single day, however, but an entire season, which lasts for seven weeks, or fifty days. It concludes with Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles and filled them with His gifts, enabling them to go out and proclaim the Gospel to the whole world.

1. What are the five most important liturgical events during Triduum?

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2. Which two Sacraments' origins do we honor and celebrate on Holy Thursday?

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3. What do Bishops do on Holy Thursday morning?

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4. What happened on the first Good Friday?

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5. What happens during veneration of the Cross?

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6. What does the procession of the Paschal Candle at the Easter Vigil represent?

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7. What is recounted by the various readings at the Easter Vigil?

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8. What three Sacraments are celebrated to bring people who have been preparing for it into full communion with the Catholic Church?

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9. When does the Easter season end?

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10. Have you ever been to one of the Triduum liturgies? Which one? What was it like?

Or:

If you haven't been to one of the Triduum liturgies before, which one would you most like to go to? Why?

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# The Last Supper

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**Directions:** Look for the items below in the painting *The Last Supper* by Vicente Juan Macip and answer the questions.

## Part 1

Complete the painting by drawing your own version of Jesus at the Last Supper in the white space. In the original version of this painting, Jesus is holding the Eucharist and giving it to His Apostles for the first time. Sitting on the table in front of Jesus is a chalice that holds His Precious Blood. There is also a halo surrounding Jesus' head. Be sure your drawing includes all of these things.

## Part 2

Read the story of the Last Supper from Luke 22:14-20. Then, answer the questions:

When the hour came, he took his place at table with the apostles. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for, I tell you, I shall not eat it [again] until there is fulfillment in the kingdom of God. Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; for I tell you [that] from this time on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you."

1. How does the painting (and your drawing of Jesus) illustrate this Gospel story?

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2. What does Jesus say when He gives His Apostles the Eucharist for the first time?

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3. What in this Gospel story tells you that Jesus made the Apostles the first priests?

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4. How would you describe the way the Apostles are reacting to Jesus giving them the Eucharist in the painting?

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5. Imagine that you were there at the Last Supper with the Apostles. How would you have felt when Jesus gave you the Eucharist?

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