

THE WEEK OF SALVATION

an overview of the events of Holy Week

Usually, it is obvious in parishes that something important is about to happen. Six weeks of penance, prayer and special devotions come to a climax. Bold signs and symbols are everywhere. Rituals seem to be more exciting at this time than during the rest of the year. They tell a religious story that is powerful and unambiguous. Emotions are a mixture of relief and anticipation. It is Holy Week.

The first Holy Week, by the plan of God, was the most important week in the life of Jesus. This Holy Week, too, even though our gatherings will be small and socially distanced due to the coronavirus, should be the most important week in the entire year for each one of us. It should be a week of prayer and meditation. The title which the Eastern Catholic Church gives to this week says it all. It is *The Week of Salvation*. No one day or one religious tradition would be enough to celebrate such an immense happening. Holy Week is the heart of the Church year. The word "holy" in the descriptive title "Holy Week" highlights this week as unique and most holy in the annual cycle of time for Christians. Official Church rituals and the other traditions observed during this week remember and make present the passing of Jesus from life to death to new life and all of creation along with Him.

The entire Passion took place in and around Jerusalem (the capital of Palestine). It probably occurred in the year 30 AD, during the Passover week, from the 9th to

the 16th of the Jewish month of Nisan (March/April). Jerusalem was crowded with pilgrims. The Jewish nation was subject to Rome. And while the Roman governor was Pontius Pilate, the Jews were still ruled by their High Priest, Caiphas, and the Council of seventy elders called the Sanhedrin. Galilee, the region in the north of Palestine, had Herod as its king.

Jesus of Nazareth, who for three years had been preaching the Kingdom of God, working miracles, and finally claiming to be the Messiah, was so growing in popularity that the High Priest and Jewish authorities saw in Him a serious threat to their power over the people. The recent resurrection of Lazarus had caused many to believe in Jesus. So, the leaders planned to kill Lazarus and to arrest and kill Jesus as a seditionist in order to end this threat to their power. However, as a subject nation, they could not put anyone to death. Only the Roman Governor had the *ius gladii*, the power to pronounce a sentence of death. Now Passover week, with the great influx of pilgrims to Jerusalem, was at hand.

NOTRE DAME VISITATION PARISH
Schuylerville, NY



SAINT JOSEPH'S CHURCH
Greenwich, NY

Under such circumstances, that first Holy Week began.

PASSION (PALM) SUNDAY

Sunday, March 28, 2021

Mass with Bishop Edward Scharfenberger will be livestreamed from the Cathedral at 11am

Mass with Fr. Ed Kacerguis will be livestreamed from St. Joseph's in Greenwich at 10am

In-person Masses at Notre Dame-Visitation in Schuylerville 4pm & 11:15am

(advance registration is encouraged as we're nearing seating capacity)

On Passion Sunday the Church celebrates Christ's entrance into Jerusalem to accomplish His paschal mystery. Accordingly, the memorial of this event is included in every Mass although the procession or solemn entrance with the blessing and distribution of palms will be reduced again this year due to social distancing precautions.

Worship consists of two main parts, the procession with palms and the mass. The first part is a joyous, public demonstration of our loyalty to Christ our King – in spirit we would be joining the enthusiastic crowds that accompanied Him into Jerusalem – publicly pledging our loyalty to Him. The Mass, however, with its reading of the Passion, is under the shadow of the Cross. The acclamation "*Hosanna to the Son of David*" would soon be followed by the



cry "*Crucify Him*". Thus, Passion Sunday's liturgy is devoted more to the suffering of Jesus than to His triumphant reception by the people. By telescoping those events, the Church emphasizes the meaning of Holy Week rather than presents an accurate historical progression of saving event. On "Palm Sunday" the Church celebrates the beginning of Jesus' "passage" from life to death to new life, the Paschal Mystery.

*By nightfall, the Hosannas had long since faded into silence.
The Holy City had not recognized what manner of King it had welcomed.
Somewhere near there was a tree, perhaps already felled, that was
destined to serve as His throne.
Somewhere there was a thorny vine, destined to crown His brow.
Somewhere three nails and a Roman spear awaited their glorious fate.*

MONDAY, TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

March 29-31, 2021

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week are preparation days, both spiritually and physically, for the holy days to come later in the week. Traditions of receiving

the sacrament of reconciliation during these days is reminiscent of ancient practices. During the early centuries repentant sinners were absolved from their sins on

Holy Thursday after six weeks or more of public penance. This day was chosen so that all could participate in the solemnities of the Holy Triduum and Easter.

In Monday's Gospel, Jesus is anointed by Mary, Lazarus' sister, in advance of His

death. On Tuesday, we hear Jesus tell His disciples that one of them would betray Him. In Wednesday's Gospel, Judas is paid thirty pieces of silver to betray Jesus. That is why this day used to be called "Spy Wednesday".

HOLY THURSDAY

April 1, 2021

Holy Thursday is the Thursday of Holy Week and is also known as "Maundy Thursday." The only Masses that are permitted on Holy Thursday are the Mass of Chrism (which is usually celebrated a week earlier here in the Albany Diocese) and the Mass of the Lord's Supper. According to a very ancient tradition, all

Masses without a congregation are forbidden. The Eucharist is distributed only during the liturgies on Holy Thursday and Good Friday, but may be distributed to the sick at any convenient time. Funeral Masses are usually not allowed on Holy Thursday or during the Easter Triduum.

THE EASTER TRIDUUM

Thursday evening through Sunday evening

"Christ redeemed us all and gave perfect glory to God principally through His paschal mystery: dying He destroyed our death and rising He restored our life. Therefore, the Easter Triduum of the passion and resurrection of Christ is the culmination of the entire liturgical year. The Easter Triduum (Latin for "Three Days") begins with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper (on Holy Thursday), reaches its high point in the Easter Vigil (on Holy Saturday), and closes with the evening prayer on Easter Sunday. On Good Friday and, if possible, also on Holy Saturday until the Easter Vigil, the Easter fast is observed everywhere."

That is how the Church's calendar speaks of these Three Days. Lent ends on Holy Thursday. Friday and Saturday are days of private and communal prayer, of strict fasting from food and work and entertainment. This is in anticipation of the great Vigil where the catechumens at last would be baptized, confirmed and join in the eucharistic banquet for the first time. This fasting from food and work and entertainment is not sad and penitential, rather it is a fasting of eager excitement as we approach the Vigil with its Scripture readings, the baptism, and the renewal of our Passover. Thus, are the death and resurrection of Christ proclaimed in our midst. At various moments from Thursday evening until Sunday, the community would usually gather for prayer and vigil. With no Mass on Friday or during the day on Saturday, our attention would be concentrated on the historical significance of the cross. This also helps to place emphasis on the Easter Vigil as the essential paschal celebration wherein we *pass over* from penance to joy, from death to life, and from the old to the new.

Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper

Holy Thursday, April 1, 2021

Mass with Bishop Edward Scharfenberger will be livestreamed from the Cathedral at 5:30pm
In-person Mass with Fr. Ed Kacerguis at Notre Dame-Visitation in Schuylerville at 7pm
(advance registration strongly suggested)

On this day the Lord instituted the Eucharist; at the Last Supper He prepared the sacrificial meal that should through the ages unite His members with Himself. Today is, therefore, the day of Christian community and of divine and fraternal charity. Even if we are unable to attend Mass this evening due to limited seating or concern about the coronavirus, we can still gather in spirit with the Apostles and our



brothers and sisters to commemorate the great gift of His own flesh and blood. It is for this reason that all the altar breads that are used in public masses on Holy Thursday are freshly consecrated at this evening Mass for the communion of the clergy and the laity both today and tomorrow.

During tonight's Mass, the institution of the Eucharist, the institution of the priesthood, and Christ's commandment of brotherly love are commemorated. To demonstrate this



brotherly love, the celebrant washes the feet of several people (this practice, called the *mandatum*, comes from St. John's Gospel). After the post-communion prayer, the Holy Eucharist is carried in procession with incense and song to a place of reposition, a side chapel or place suitably decorated. After placing the consecrated bread in the tabernacle, an atmosphere of quiet waiting with the Lord begins. Following a brief period of silent adoration, the priest and ministers genuflect and return to the sacristy in silence, after which the altar is stripped.

*Sing my tongue, the Savior's glory. Of His flesh the myst'ry sing;
Of the Blood all price exceeding, shed by our immortal King.
Destoned for the world's redemption, from a noble womb to spring.*

*On the night of that last supper, seated with His chosen band,
He, the Paschal victim eating, first fulfills the Law's command.
Then as food to all His brethren, gives Himself with His own hand.*

*Down in adoration falling, Lo! the sacred host we hail;
Lo! o'er ancient forms departing, newer rites of grace prevail;
Faith for all defects supplying where the feeble senses fail.*

- *Pange Lingua Gloriosi*

GOOD FRIDAY

Friday, April 9, 2020

The Friday of Holy Week, Good Friday, on which the anniversary of the passion and death of Christ is commemorated, is the only day of the year on which Mass is not celebrated. The altar is completely bare, without cloths, candles or cross and the tabernacle is empty.

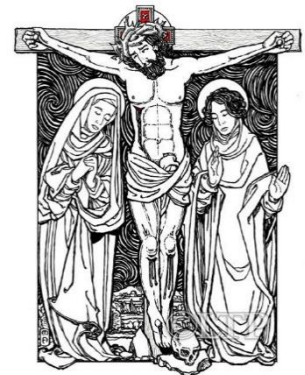
Today and tomorrow the Church takes on the Paschal Fast, the Easter Fast. This is not a fast of penance, but of anticipation. It is fasting like the fasting of a bride or groom before the wedding, a fasting of excitement when we are so filled with anticipation that we cannot eat. We fast also from work and from all usual distractions. Minds and hearts grow hungry for God's Word. Our lives are filled instead with the mystery of Jesus' death and resurrection, with how we ourselves take on that dying and rising, little by little becoming the image of Christ in this world. Friday afternoon or evening, the parish community would usually gather to read the Passion, to pray and to venerate the Holy Cross.

*For our sake Christ was obedient
Accepting even death, death on a cross.
- Christus factus est*

Stations of the Cross

Traditionally, Lenten devotions in parishes have focused on the suffering and death of Jesus. The most popular one is known as the "Stations of the Cross". During the time of the crusades (1095-1270), it became popular for pilgrims visiting the Holy Land to walk in the footsteps of Jesus to Calvary. In the next two centuries, after the Moslems recaptured the Holy Land, pilgrimages were too dangerous. A substitute pilgrimage, the Stations of the Cross, became a popular outdoor devotion throughout Europe. They represented critical events from Scripture or tradition of Jesus' journey to Calvary and varied in number from five to twenty until Pope Clement XII fixed the number at fourteen "stations". In the mid-eighteenth century,

Stations were allowed inside churches and have since become familiar fixtures at Catholic churches. During the 1960's it became popular to add a fifteenth Station



representing the end of the journey – the Resurrection. There are many sources available on the internet – including Notre Dame-Visitation's website at www.tinyurl.com/ndvschuyler-2east – for us to take part in this pilgrimage in our own homes during this Lent and Passiontide.

Celebration of the Lord's Passion

Service with Bishop Edward Scharfenberger will be livestreamed from the Cathedral at 5:30pm
In-person Service with Fr. Ed Kacerguis at Notre Dame-Visitation in Schuylerville at 7pm
(advance registration strongly suggested)



This “liturgical action” called by some the “Mass of the Pre-Sanctified” (because it uses the bread consecrated the night before), is the finest example of the prayer services held regularly in parish churches in ancient times before daily mass became popular. The emphasis is on Scripture readings and prayers which develop the theme of Jesus’ suffering and death. It consists of the Liturgy of the Word, veneration of the cross, and reception of Holy Communion. After the gospel and homily, the celebrant, wearing red vestments, would usually lead the congregation in a series of solemn prayers for all classes and needs of the Church and of mankind. Christ died for all, and these great petitions, as it were, interpret the mind and heart of Jesus as he hung dying on the cross. These prayers are for the Church, the Pope, the clergy and the laity of the Church, those preparing for baptism, the unity of Christians, the Jewish people, those who do not believe in Christ, those who do not believe in God, all in public office, and those in special need. Last year, these petitions included an additional intercession, “For all our nation and the world during pandemic”:

*Let us pray, dear brothers and sisters,
To God, the Father Almighty,
Trusting in His love and providence,
That He may continue to strengthen and
to guide us
In this time of difficulty and great need.*

*Almighty God,
Who sent us Jesus, your Son
As our divine physician and savior,
Hear our heartfelt prayers
For those who have fallen ill,
For those who have died,
For those who are vulnerable and fearful,
And for those who work for healing;
That we may be sure in faith, strong in
hope,
Perfected in love,
And so experience the grace of
deliverance.
Through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.*

The second part of the usual service consists of the solemn unveiling of the cross and its adoration by clergy and faithful. It is not the crucified body of Jesus that is unveiled, but the glorious instrument of our redemption – through the cross Jesus triumphs over sin. After the adoration of the cross, the altar is prepared, and the congregation is ready to receive sacramentally Him who hung on the cross for our salvation. After communion and the dismissal, all depart in silence and the altar would be stripped.

Christ is no longer present in the church in the Blessed Sacrament. Until the Easter Vigil, Christians experience something of the great void felt by the Apostles after the death of the Lord.

*The standards of the King appear,
The mystery of the Cross shines out in glory,
The Cross on which Life suffered death
And by that death gave back life to us.*

*The words of David's true prophetic song
Were fulfilled, in which he announced
To the nations: "God has reigned from a tree."*

*Tree of dazzling beauty
Adorned with the purple of the King's blood,
And chosen from a stock worthy to bear limbs so
sacred!*

- *Vexilla Regis*

HOLY SATURDAY

Saturday, April 3, 2021

The Paschal Fast begun on Thursday night continues today. The Church puts aside work and food to continue watching and praying. Holy Saturday has always been an "alitururgical" day. There has never been a Eucharistic liturgy, not even a Mass of the Pre-Sanctified for Holy Saturday, reminding us of how the Apostles spent the day mourning the death of the Lord.

The Easter Vigil

Mass with Bishop Edward Scharfenberger will be livestreamed from the Cathedral at 8pm
Mass with Fr. Ed Kacerguis will be livestreamed from St. Joseph's in Greenwich at 8pm
(We have already reached our seating capacity for in-person attendance at St. Joseph's Mass)

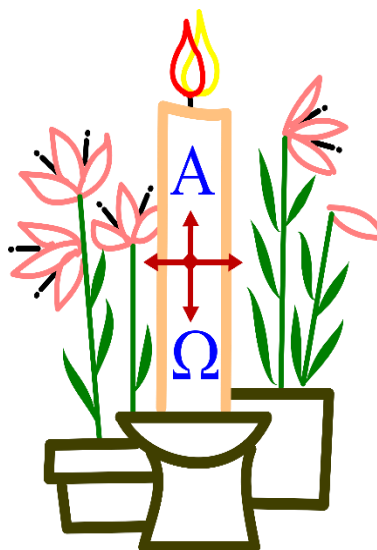
During the early dark of night, a fire begins to flicker outside the church. An Easter Candle, boldly marked with the symbols of the current year and of Christ's divinity and glorious suffering, is lit from the new fire. Usually it would be carried prominently into the midst of the people and is heralded with the joyful song, "*Christ our Light! Thanks be to God!*" When, from this one light, the candles of hundreds of assembled believers are lit until the church is ablaze with new light. A deacon or cantor sings the *Exsultet*, an ancient and beautiful song, before the Easter Candle. Powerful Scripture readings about water and new creation are proclaimed. Easter water

would be blessed with the sacred oils consecrated by Bishop Scharfenberger at the Chrism Mass while the Litany of Saints is sung. If there are any catechumens, they would step forward, speak their baptismal vows with supportive voices of the congregation around them and would be baptized. Bells ring out, flowers, especially Easter Lilies, decorate the sanctuary. *Alleluias* are sung for the first time in six weeks. Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. No other moment of the church year is as rich in powerful and earthly symbols as the Easter Vigil. It is *the* night of all nights. It is the heart of Christianity itself. It is Easter!

This holy night is the most solemn memorial in the entire year of the central mystery of our redemption – Christ’s saving death and glorious resurrection. The Easter vigil in the night when Christ rose from the dead, is therefore, considered the “mother of all vigils.” During it, the Church keeps watch, awaiting the resurrection of the Lord and celebrating it in the sacraments. The Vigil has four parts: (1) the Service of Light; (2) the Liturgy of the Word; (3) the Liturgy of Baptism; and (4) the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Those who participate in the Mass at night may receive communion again at the second Mass of Easter.

The first part of the Vigil is centered around fire or light, the visible token of Christ, who proclaimed Himself the Light of the World. On Easter morning He rose, resplendent as the dawning sun, thereby conquering forever the dark night of sin. With this thought in mind, the Service has four rites or parts: (1) the Blessing of the new fire; (2) the blessing and lighting of the Easter – or “*Paschal*” – Candle; (3) the carrying and distribution of the burning candle through the darkened church; and (4) the chanting of the Easter Proclamation (the “*Exsultet*”). These represent Christ’s resurrection, the glory and splendor of His risen presence among us, our joyful sharing in His triumph and our own heartfelt gratitude for such great blessings.

After the Service of Light, the Liturgy of the Word takes place. There are nine readings assigned to the Easter Vigil: seven from the



Old Testament, two from the New. When necessary, the number of readings may be reduced, but three Old Testament readings are required before the Epistle and Gospel reading.

The third part of the Vigil, the Liturgy of Baptism, centers around the mystery of Baptism, by which the light of Christ was first given to us. The Liturgy consists of the Litany of the Saints, in which we ask the saints to assist the prospective new members of the Church and assist all of us to be true to our baptism; the solemn blessing of the water for baptism, preparing it for the great task it must perform – the renewal of souls; and the renunciation of sin followed by our profession of faith.

The Easter Vigil comes to a climax with the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice. As baptized members of Christ, we would usually assist at the Eucharist, the sacrificial reenactment of the death and resurrection of our Lord and the salvation of all men and women. And no other Mass throughout the year is so significant as this Easter Mass, for it is the solemn anniversary celebration of Christ’s “*pasch*” or “*passage*” from death to resurrection.

*Exult, let them exult, the hosts of heaven,
Exult, let Angel minister of God exult,
Let the trumpet of salvation*

*Sound aloud our mighty King's triumph!
Be glad, let earth be glad, as glory floods her,
Ablaze with light from her eternal King,
Let all corners of the earth be glad,
Knowing an end to gloom and darkness.*

*It is truly right and just,
With ardent love of mind and heart
And with devoted service of our voice,
To acclaim our God invisible, the almighty Father,
And Jesus Christ, our Lord, his Son, his Only Begotten.
Who for our sake paid Adam's debt to the eternal
Father,
And, pouring out his own dear Blood,
Wiped clean the record of our ancient sinfulness.*

*O truly blessed night,
Worthy alone to know the time and hour
When Christ rose from the underworld!
This is the night
Of which it is written:
The night shall be as bright as day,
Dazzling is the night for me,
And full of gladness.
The sanctifying power of this night
Dispels wickedness, washes faults away,
Restores innocence to the fallen, and joy to mourners,
Drives out hatred, fosters concord, and brings down the
mighty.*

- From the *Exsultet*

EASTER SUNDAY

Sunday, April 4, 2021

Mass with Fr. Ed Kacerguis will be livestreamed from St. Joseph's in Greenwich at 10am
Notre Dame-Visitation in Schuylerville's 11:15am Mass is already at its in-person seating capacity
Mass with Very Rev. Fr. David LeFort, Rector, will be livestreamed from the Cathedral at 11am



The theme of Easter morning echoes that of the Easter vigil. It remembers and celebrates the very foundation of Christianity: Jesus is raised from the dead and is Lord. Those who believe and are baptized share in this resurrection to new life. This theme will continue for the next fifty days of the Easter season.

The solemnity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is celebrated in the Church on the first Sunday after the vernal equinox. Easter is, thus, a moveable feast, falling on a different Sunday in about a twelve-year cycle. The word "Easter" comes from the Anglo-Saxon and is derived from their pagan goddess for the dawn. The Latin name, "Pascha" comes from the Hebrew and refers to their Passover or freedom from the Egyptians. The texts of the Easter Sunday Mass stress the fact that Christ has risen from the dead. But they also show how the Lord's resurrection is a fact with a meaning for us and how, as members of the risen Christ, we have access to a new life, the very life of God. The renewal of baptismal promises from the Easter Vigil is repeated during the Masses of Easter, following the homily.

The Three Days of the Easter Triduum continue until evening of Sunday. And at the same time, the Church begins the Fifty Days, the time of rejoicing between Easter and Pentecost.

*V. This is the day the Lord has made;
R. let us rejoice and be glad. Alleluia.*

*V. Christ is risen, alleluia!
R. Christ is truly risen, alleluia!*

- A traditional Easter greeting

EASTER WEEK & THE EASTER SEASON

Monday, April 5 – Sunday, May 23, 2021

Easter does not end abruptly. It begins a season. Like all feasts in the Church year, it is celebrated with an octave, a week-long festival. During the early centuries, those who were baptized at the Easter Vigil would gather during Easter Week for further instruction in the Catholic faith. These special instructions were called "mystagogia" and were an important feature of the newly baptized adults' journey of new faith continuing for the fifty days of Eastertime. Please God, that the risks of catching the Coronavirus will diminish sufficiently to allow us to gather as a parish family before the end of this year's Easter season.

