



MARCH 2024 (2)

Dear Friends and Benefactors



“The glory of these forty days, we celebrate with songs of praise, for Christ, by whom all things were made, himself has fasted and has prayed.” These words penned by Pope St Gregory the Great (540-604) provides for us an insight into the period of Lent which is drawing to a close as we enter the time of Holy Week. The words of the Preface of Lent 1 captures Gregory’s words *“Each year you give us this joyful season when we prepare to celebrate the paschal mystery with mind and heart renewed. You give us a spirit of loving reverence for you, our Father, and of willing service to our neighbour. As we recall the great events that gave us new life in Christ, you bring the image of your Son to perfection within us.”* Our time of Lent offers us the opportunity of more deeply responding to the love that God has shown to us. Holy Week offers us the opportunity to enter into the heart of the mysteries of this week, mysteries which form the very foundation of our Christian faith. We do not understand everything about the mystery of God but the experience of Holy Week allows us once again to reflect of self-giving and sacrifice, the fickleness of humanity, the suffering of others and the gift of resurrection joy and transformation.

Holy Week

Palm Sunday: Palm Sunday begins Holy Week. It commemorated Jesus’ joy filled entry into Jerusalem. The people welcomed Jesus crying out Hosanna. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, *“Hosanna!”* *“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”* *“Blessed is the king of Israel!”* John 12:13



Spy Wednesday The name is associated with the betrayal of Jesus Christ by Judas Iscariot. Judas agreed to betray Jesus to the authorities on this day, leading to Jesus' eventual arrest and crucifixion. The term "spy" reflects the idea that Judas was acting as a betrayer or informant.

Chrism Mass The Bishop concelebrates this Mass with the Priests of the diocese in the presence of the faithful. The priests renew their priestly promises, and the Bishop consecrates the Sacred Oils of Chrism, Catechumens and the Sick.



Easter Triduum (Three Days)

The Liturgies of these days form one liturgical action beginning with the sign of the Cross at the Mass of the Lord’s supper and ending with the final blessing at the Easter Vigil. This is why it is important that we make the effort to attend the three main services in these three days Mass of the Lord’s Supper, the Good Friday Passion and the Easter Vigil. But if you cannot manage these three try to attend what you are able to.

Mass of the Lord’s Supper: It is the Mass that commemorates Jesus Christ's Last Supper with his disciples and reminds us of the importance of humility, selflessness, and service to others. The words of Jesus, *“Do this in memory of me”* forms the basis of the Church’s commitment to the celebration of the Eucharist. We are doing what Christ asked us to do.

Good Friday: The Church mourns for Christ's death, reveres the cross, and marvels at his life for his obedience until death. An ancient homily captures the spirit of the day like this *"What is happening? Today there is a great silence over the earth, a great silence, and stillness, a great silence because the King sleeps; the earth was in terror and was still, because God slept in the flesh and raised up those who were sleeping from the ages. God has died in the flesh, and the underworld has trembled."*



Holy Saturday: On Holy Saturday the Church waits at the Lord's tomb in prayer and fasting, meditating on his Passion and Death and on his Descent into Hell, and awaiting his Resurrection.

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Easter Vigil: The Easter Vigil is an ancient liturgy celebrated on the night before Easter Sunday. It was initially an all-night vigil that started in the middle of the night and didn't end until the first rays of dawn when the celebration of Mass began. For early Christians, it was a way to welcome the rising of the Son of God, who dispels the darkness of night. The service consists of the following four parts:

First Part: The Liturgy of Light: The church is shrouded in darkness as a fire is lit outside. The Easter candle is lit from it. The candle represents Jesus Christ, the light of the world. The deacon or priest processes into the dark church and stops three times, proclaiming "Christ, our Light!" By the time he reaches the sanctuary the entire church is blazing with candles that were lit from the Easter candle.

The Easter Proclamation: When the Easter candle arrives in the sanctuary, the "Easter Proclamation" (also called the *Exsultet*, from its first word in Latin, "Rejoice") is sung, an ancient hymn that speaks of the many mysteries of this night.

Second Part: The Liturgy of the Word: A number of readings are read, from Genesis through the New Testament, God's marvellous plan is unfolded. The readings are followed by Psalms.

Third Part: The Baptismal Liturgy: Depending on the circumstances of each parish, a baptismal liturgy is performed. This is the liturgy at which all those who have been preparing to join the Church, or to complete their sacraments as older children or adults, are initiated into the Christian community. The water of the baptismal font is blessed in order to prepare for those who will be washed clean from their sins and reborn in the death of Christ. Those present also renew their baptismal vows.

Fourth Part: The Liturgy of the Eucharist: The liturgy draws to its culmination and conclusion with the celebration of the holy Eucharist, in which the newly baptized will partake for the first time.



With every good wish and blessing for a spirit filled Holy Week and a joy filled Easter.

Fr Hugh