

# HOLY WEEK

**Holy Week**, or the ‘Great Week’ as it is sometimes known, is of course the most important week of the Church’s cycle of prayer, and begins with Palm Sunday. Year after year we recall the momentous events of our redemption. But the Church’s seasons, feast days, and the days of the Sacred Triduum in particular, are much more than merely occasions for remembering. Just as in the Mass we are made sacramentally present at the suffering, death, and resurrection of Our Lord, so on each of the Church’s feast days we are made present at the mystery which the liturgy recalls, and more than that, we enter into those mysteries through the portal of the divinely instituted Sacraments and rituals. The Liturgy, being a gift from God given to us through His Church, brings God down to us and, at the same time, draws us back up to Him.

During the Sacred Triduum, more than at any other time of the year, we are reminded that the Church’s Liturgy is something Christ does, not something we do. On Palm Sunday Christ entered triumphally into the city of Jerusalem to take possession of the Lord’s own house, the Temple, only to be rejected by His own people just a few days later.

On Maundy Thursday Christ washes the feet of His Apostles, institutes the Mass and the Priesthood, sweats blood in the Garden of Gethsemane as He absorbs, as it were, the full weight of the world’s sins, and suffers betrayal.

On Good Friday, He is tried, ridiculed, scourged, crowned with thorns, and led to the place of execution. He hangs on the Cross for three long hours, offers up prayer and supplication to the Father on our behalf, forgives sins, and accomplishes our Redemption through His death.

On Holy Saturday (please note, Easter Saturday is the Saturday *after* Easter Sunday) even in death He does not rest but carries out the Harrowing of Hell, thrusting the dæmons aside and taking the hand of Adam, who takes the hand of Eve, and so forth, until all the righteous from the days before the Incarnation of the Word are released from their long sojourn in the Limbo of the Fathers, and are led to their salvation.

In the Church’s Liturgy, we are drawn into a participation of these mysteries, made present to us in ritual and ceremony. Through the very words and actions of the priest, who stands *in persona Christi* (‘in the person of Christ’) by virtue of his ordination, we are, here and now, made present to the supernatural realities of our Faith both historically, two thousand years ago, and eternally, before the throne of God in Heaven.