

# Watch and Pray: Journal for the Triduum

## **Holy Thursday**

### **Focus**

Holy Thursday celebrates the institution of the Eucharist.

- The whole faith community, including all the priests, celebrates this liturgy.
- The tabernacle is empty at the beginning of the liturgy—the faithful receive the Eucharist that is consecrated during this liturgy, not from previous liturgies.
- The readings are Exodus 12:1–8, 11–14; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26; and John 13:1–15.
- The Gospel tells of the washing of the feet. After the homily, the pastor of the community removes his chasuble and washes the feet of twelve members of the community.
- After the Mass concludes, the Eucharist is transferred to another location. This is a solemn ritual that includes a blessing with incense.
- After the Eucharist is transferred, the Church is prepared for Good Friday: crosses are removed or covered, the table or altar is made bare, and the lights are turned out.

### **Jesus' Actions**

- Jesus shares his Body and Blood and washes the feet of the disciples at the Last Supper.

### **Key Word**

- **Love.** On the eve of his Crucifixion, Jesus showed the depths of his love by giving us the Eucharist and washing the disciples' feet.

### **Reflection Question**

- How will I follow Jesus' example of love?

## Good Friday

### Focus

On Good Friday, the Church remembers Jesus' Crucifixion.

- No sacraments are celebrated on Good Friday or Holy Saturday (until the Easter Vigil).
- The readings for this liturgy are Isaiah 52:12–53; Hebrews 4:14–16, 5:7–9; and John 18:1–19:42.
- This liturgy is somber but not sad: the altar is bare; there is no greeting or opening song. The general intercessions are prayed in a special way in this liturgy. After each petition, the assembly is asked to kneel and pray silently. In these special petitions, prayers are offered for:
 

<input type="checkbox"/> the Church	<input type="checkbox"/> the Jewish people
<input type="checkbox"/> the Pope	<input type="checkbox"/> those who do not believe in Christ
<input type="checkbox"/> the clergy and the laity of the Church	<input type="checkbox"/> those who do not believe in God
<input type="checkbox"/> those preparing for Baptism	<input type="checkbox"/> all in public office
<input type="checkbox"/> the unity of Christians	<input type="checkbox"/> those in special need
- After the general intercessions, the veneration of the cross takes place. In many places the veneration is an opportunity to kneel before and touch or kiss the cross. A Communion service follows the veneration. Communion consecrated the day before is distributed to the faithful. There is no recessional song, and silence is maintained.

### Jesus' Actions

- Jesus leads his disciples to a garden to pray and is arrested. He is tried, sentenced to death, suffers, and dies on the cross.

### Key Word

- **Passion.** Jesus' death on the cross is called his Passion, a word commonly associated with the strongest feelings of love.

### Reflection Questions

- For what and for whom would I give my life?
- How is God calling me to share my life and my passion?
- How can I join in Christ's Passion through prayer, conversion, and action?

## Easter Vigil

### Focus

The focus of the Easter Vigil is remembering the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- The liturgy begins with a service of light. The new fire is blessed, and the Easter candle is lit for the first time. This is followed by a special prayer called the Easter proclamation, or the *Exultet*.
- The readings for the Vigil are:
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 1:1–2:2	<input type="checkbox"/> Ezekiel 36:16–28
<input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 22:1–18	<input type="checkbox"/> Romans 6:3–11
<input type="checkbox"/> Exodus 14:15–15:1	<input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 28:1–10 (in cycle A)
<input type="checkbox"/> Isaiah 54:5–14	<input type="checkbox"/> Mark 16:1–8 (in cycle B)
<input type="checkbox"/> Isaiah 55:1–11	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 25:1–12 (in cycle C)
<input type="checkbox"/> Baruch 3:9–15 and 3:32–4:4	
- After the homily, new members are initiated and receive the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist. A blessing of the water is included. This portion of the liturgy concludes with the whole community renewing their baptismal promises. The liturgy of the Eucharist follows.

### Jesus' Actions

- Jesus, risen from the dead, goes to greet the disciples.

### Key Word

- **Joy.** The women who discovered Jesus' empty tomb were confused at first and then filled with joy. The disciples who gathered in the upper room did not believe at first but were filled with joy upon hearing the news.

### Reflection Questions

- What does Easter mean to me personally?
- How can I share with others the joy and the truth of Christ's Resurrection at Easter?

## Good Friday Prayer

God,  
today I celebrate the incredible realization  
that you have not abandoned me.

You continually restore my hope  
and never tire in your passion for me,  
even in the midst  
of this most unquestionable horror story:  
the agony of blood and nails and thorns,  
the loneliness of the cross,  
the abandonment by friends and followers.

You ask me to travel to the dark place as well  
and feel your searing pain,  
feel your loneliness,  
feel your grief of disloyalty.

Come to me today  
and sign me with your cross.  
May I wear the cross proudly  
and always live as your servant.  
Into your hands, God, I commend my life. Amen.

(The prayer is from *Praying with the Word—Lent, Holy Week, and Easter*, by David Haas [Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1997], page 92. Copyright © 1997 by David Haas. Used with permission of St. Anthony Messenger Press.)