



# Living the Triduum at Home



**A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO CHRISTIAN LIVING  
DURING THE SACRED PASCHAL TRIDUUM**

# Introduction

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On the evening of Holy Thursday, the whole Church moves from Lent to the Sacred Paschal Triduum—the days from Holy Thursday until Easter Sunday. These are the most important days of the year for through them we enter into the saving mysteries of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, we should try to enter into them with a particular attentiveness and devotion so that the graces the Lord merited for us through the mysteries that make up this time may bear abundant fruit in our lives.

These days are not only concerned with the major liturgies in our churches though. They should also lead to a conversion of our lives, and as such they can impact every aspect of this time. From the way that we approach work to the practices we take up at home, these days can bear great fruit if we do our best to enter into them in everything that we do.

To help draw this out, here are some practical recommendations on how the mysteries that make up the Triduum can guide us both in our churches and in our homes. Feel free to choose whichever ones you would like or other cultural customs that you or your family have found helpful. The whole goal is to enter more deeply into this sacred time.

From our devotional practices to our culinary customs and to everything in between, these days can be rich with grace and lead to a flowering of holiness in our hearts and in our homes. May the Lord bring that about for you and your loved ones.

*Fr. Peter Martyr Yungwirth, O.P.*

Fr. Peter Martyr Yungwirth, O.P.  
Pastor

# Preparations for the Triduum

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## DEVOTIONAL PRACTICES

- Many people have devotional practices that are part of their daily lives. While necessary devotional practices should be maintained (i.e. members of a Confraternity should continue saying their daily prayers for the confraternity), putting aside any unnecessary devotions and instead praying with Christ or taking up particular devotional customs for these days can help you enter more deeply into the graces of the Triduum.

## HOME PREPARATION

- Having the supplies you will need to decorate your home before the evening of Holy Thursday is a great means to be more free to enter into this time. Going shopping for any food, flowers, or other supplies can make this so much more possible.
- It can also be helpful to mirror a custom in churches where the statues and images are often veiled during Passiontide (the last two weeks of Lent). At home, veiling or hiding religious images, excepting crucifixes, from Holy Thursday until the Easter Vigil is a fruitful way to enter into this tradition as well.

## WORK AND SCHOOL RELATED

- If you are working, it can be helpful to put up an away message on email indicating that it might take you a little longer to reply. Depending on your occupation, this might not be the easiest task, but if this is possible it can give you the freedom to pray and not have to worry about not responding to emails or working on other projects.
- If you are a student, it can be so helpful to see these days not as an extra chance to get caught up on papers but as a time to take a break in the midst of the semester. Trying to finish papers and homework ahead of time can help free you to enter into these days with greater attentiveness.



## Holy Thursday

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### LITURGY OF THE DAY

- *Mass of the Lord's Supper*

### SACRED SCRIPTURE (for personal meditation or during a meal)

- Before Mass - Last Supper (John 13-17)*
- After Mass - Agony in the Garden (Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:4-46) and Jesus' arrest (Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-52; Luke 23:47-53; John 18:1-12)*

### DEVOTIONAL PRACTICES

- Eucharistic Adoration*** - This is the day when the Lord gave the gift of the Eucharist to the Church. He had already spoken about the need to eat His Body and consume His Blood in John 6, but on this day, He gives the Church the Blessed Sacrament. Thus, for centuries, the Church has had a special attentiveness to the Eucharist on this day and has a period of Eucharistic adoration after Mass. During this time, it is as if we are in the Garden of Gethsemane, waiting with Jesus for an hour (cf. Matthew 26:40) or more. Since Jesus will soon be taken away, this is a beautiful time to sit and be in His presence, even if it is brief.

- **Seven Church Walk** - There is a beautiful custom of visiting the altars of repose at seven churches on the evening of Holy Thursday after the Mass of the Lord's Supper. According to Biblical language, seven is one of the perfect numbers, and so this practice is meant to foster a more perfect love for the Blessed Sacrament. Even if you are not able to find seven churches to visit, visiting what churches you can is a beautiful way to grow in devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.
- **Praying for Priests** - Holy Thursday also is the day when we celebrate the institution of the priesthood at the Last Supper. Christ not only gave us the Holy Eucharist but also the priesthood. This, then, is a beautiful day to pray for priests, especially that they can grow in the grace to be holy priests, and to express gratitude to any priests you know.

## CULINARY CUSTOMS

- **Celebratory Dinner** - When we begin the Triduum, we can put off our Lenten practices since the Lenten season has ended. Dinner on Holy Thursday is a beautiful way to make this transition. On this day, we are invited to celebrate both the institution of the Eucharist and the priesthood, and so a celebratory dinner with family and/or friends is a beautiful custom.
- **Lamb, Bitter Herbs, Bread, and Wine** - The Last Supper was carried out like the Jewish Passover meal. At that meal, it was prescribed that the Jewish people were to eat lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs (cf. Exodus 12:1-11). At the Last Supper, we also see the use of wine, which further connects the meal to the words of John 6 and Christ's sacrifice on Calvary. These foods, in some form or another, make for a profound way to join Christ and the Apostles in their celebration of that first Holy Thursday.



## Good Friday

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### LITURGY OF THE DAY

- *Celebration of the Passion of the Lord*

### SACRED SCRIPTURE

- *Before the Celebration* - Trials of Jesus (*Matthew 26:57-66, 27:1-2, 11-31a; Mark 14:53-64, 15:1-20a; Luke 22:54-55, 22:66-23:25; John 18:13, 28-40; 19:1-16a*)
- *After the Celebration* - Burial of Jesus (*Matthew 27:57-61; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56a; John 19:38-42*)

### DEVOTIONAL PRACTICES

- *Stations of the Cross* - This is one of the most well known Lenten customs, and it can be particularly fruitful to pray on the day on which these stations first happened. Many churches have Stations of the Cross on Good Friday, but this can also be prayed at home around an image or statue of a crucifix.
- *Seven Last Words* - On the Cross, Jesus spoke seven times. There is a old custom in many churches of having a service to meditate on these seven sayings. Sometimes these services are only an hour, and at other times they go from Noon until 3pm, mirroring the three hours on which the Lord was on the Cross.

- **Silence, prayer, and study** - Because of the nature of this day and the supremely important and history changing moment of Jesus' crucifixion, this is a beautiful day to observe an increased amount of silence, reflection, and prayer. Spending extra time in prayer and study, refraining from listening to music, just having silence between Noon and 3pm, and other similar practices can allow the mind and heart to enter more deeply into a contemplative gaze on Calvary.
- **Burial of Christ Liturgy** - In the Eastern Churches, their evening service is a liturgy that commemorates the burial of Christ. In the West, this custom is particularly common in parts of southern Europe. The texts of Compline (Night Prayer) also allow us to enter more deeply into Christ's burial and descent into hell. Joining a church, Western or Eastern, for this liturgy can help to draw the day's saving events to a peaceful close.

## CULINARY CUSTOMS

- **Paschal Fast** - Good Friday is a day of fasting and abstinence. Along with Ash Wednesday, this is the only day when we are required not only to abstain from meat but also to fast. This fast can continue through Holy Saturday until the Easter Vigil, and the Paschal Fast as a whole is meant to stretch our hearts so that in our hunger for food we actually begin to hunger more and more for the Lord's victory over sin and death.
- **Simple and penitential meal** - As a day of fasting, we are only to eat one full meal and at two other times that when combined should not be as much as a full meal. So with the full meal of the day, one way to enter into the spirit of the day is to have something simple and possibly even penitential. It can be helpful to get you through the day, but that does not mean that it has to be fancy.



## Holy Saturday

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### LITURGY OF THE DAY

- *Easter Vigil in the Holy Night*

### SACRED SCRIPTURE

- *Before the Vigil* - Waiting on the Sabbath (Luke 23:56b)

### DEVOTIONAL PRACTICES

- *Praying for the souls in Purgatory* - On Holy Saturday, we reflect with the Church on Christ's descent into hell and His redemption of the righteous who had gone before Him. As such, this can be a good day to pray for the deceased, so that, just like those whom Christ redeemed on that first Easter, the deceased would also be led to heaven.
- *Before the Vigil* - Christ rose from the dead in the midst of a garden, and so as we prepare to enter into the joy of His resurrection at Easter, Holy Saturday is a great day to prepare the gardens of our homes. This could include cleaning the home, washing and ironing clothes, shining shoes, arranging Easter flowers, and/or preparing for a post-Easter Vigil celebration so that our homes will be ready after our return from the Easter Vigil.



- **After the Vigil** - At this point, we have entered into the graces of the Easter season, and Christ has risen from the grave. Thus, it is appropriate to throw off any of the Lenten penances that we might have taken up as well as unveil or unhide religious images that we may have hidden or veiled during the Triduum. This is now a time for feasting and celebration. Developing particular customs of the home is a great way to enter into the joy of this day.

## CULINARY CUSTOMS

- **Paschal Fast (if possible)** - According to *Paschale Solemnitatis*, "The Easter fast is sacred on the first two days of the Triduum, in which, according to ancient tradition, the Church fasts 'because the Spouse has been taken away'. Good Friday is a day of fasting and abstinence; it is also recommended that Holy Saturday be so observed, so that the Church, with uplifted and welcoming heart, be ready to celebrate the joys of the Sunday of the Resurrection." In other words, while fasting is not required on Holy Saturday, it can increase our longing for the Lord and better prepare our hearts to receive Him when He comes again on Easter.
- **Blessing of the Easter Baskets** - Even though some would argue that there are not supposed to be blessings between the Mass of the Lord's Supper and the Easter Vigil, a custom in some parts of the world is to bless Easter food on Holy Saturday. These foods would be those used for a family's celebration of Easter and thus creates another level of connection between the parish church and the home church.
- **Eggs** - Early on in Christianity, eggs were taken up as an Easter food because they are somewhat shaped like a tomb and have a hard exterior. They also were one of the foods that was forbidden to eat during Lent. Thus, they were a common part of the Easter basket goods to be blessed on Holy Saturday. The custom of decorating them also developed at least by medieval times, sometimes with plain colors and other times with elaborate designs as with the Polish and Ukrainian *pysanki*. This can be a beautiful thing to do with children to prepare for Easter.



# Easter Sunday

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## LITURGY OF THE DAY

- *Mass of the Resurrection of the Lord*

## SACRED SCRIPTURE

- ☐ Resurrection passages (*Matthew 28:1-8; Mark 16:1-18; Luke 24:1-43; John 20:1-29*)

## DEVOTIONAL PRACTICES

- ☐ *Easter Dinner* - With the joy and new life of the resurrection, we should celebrate. Easter is not meant to be a lonely day, and so this is a good day to spend with family and/or friends. If you know of anyone who might spend the day alone, it could also be a wonderful thing to invite them to join you for the celebration.
- ☐ *Easter Greeting* - Many different languages have their own Easter greetings with their appropriate responses. In English, the common greeting is "He is risen!", with the response "Indeed, He is risen!"

## CULINARY CUSTOMS

- ***Pomegranates*** - Going back to the early history of the Church, pomegranates were a symbol of the resurrection. The deep ruby color of the seeds and their juice was seen as a symbol of the Precious Blood of Christ, the large amount of seeds (some say 613, which is the number of the precepts of the Old Law) were seen as an abundance of new life, the top of the pomegranate was seen as a heraldic crown for the Lord, and the burst-open rind was seen as the grave being opened by the Lord. When pomegranates are opened, sometimes the seeds even spill out, as if the new life of Christ is spilling out from the opened grave on Easter day. So these can be beautiful fruit to accompany a festive meal celebrating the Lord's victory over death.
- ***Easter Lamb or Ham*** - A triumphant lamb, often sitting on a book with seven seals, is a common symbol of Easter because Christ is the true Lamb of God, the true sacrifice offered for the forgiveness of sins. Similarly, since in Christ the ceremonial precepts of the Old Law have been fulfilled, we are no longer bound by some of the prescriptions of the Jewish people. This includes refraining from eating pork products. Thus, lamb or ham have become the traditional foods for the main Easter meal and as means to celebrate the new life and the new covenant that Christ has brought us.
- ***Lamb cake or Colomba*** - Different cultures have their own particular Paschal pastries. Some cultures have cakes or breads shaped like a lamb or a dove (you can even get a cake mold for these). These are great options for creatively entering into the feast and can be helpful means to catechize children about different Christian symbols while teaching them something practical like baking skills.



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The photos in this booklet are from the *Armadio degli Argenti* (Wardrobe of the Silversmiths) by Bl. Fra Angelico, O.P. This whole set of images, currently in the Museum of San Marco in Florence, is a series of tempera on panel paintings of the whole life of Christ from 1451-1453 and was perhaps Fra Angelico's last work and also might have been completed later by other hands using his preparatory drawings. The title for the set of paintings, *Lex Amoris*, refers to a teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas that Christ did not come to destroy the Old Law of the patriarchs. Rather, He came to renew and complete it with His New Law of love. This *Lex Amoris*, this law of love, is what we see on full display during Holy Week.