

St. Mark Study Guide

April 13, 2017: The Paschal Triduum and the Resurrection

In the Liturgical Year, the Church celebrates the whole mystery of Christ from the Incarnation until the day of Pentecost and the expectation of Christ's second coming. The summit of the Liturgical Year is the Easter Triduum—from the evening of Holy Thursday to the evening of Easter Sunday. Though chronologically three days, they are liturgically one day unfolding for us the unity of Christ's Paschal Mystery. The presence of the Risen Lord and his saving work permeates the entire Liturgical Year: Advent, the Christmas Season, Lent, the Easter Season, and Ordinary Time.

TRIDUUM:

Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday

In the Church's liturgical calendar, these are the three days that follow the conclusion of Lent. The Triduum begins with the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday and concludes with the celebration of Evening Prayer on Easter Sunday. Moral evil—the evil of sin—exists in our human experience. (cf. CCC, nos. 309-313). Sin is a real experience. God permits such moral evil in part out of respect for the gift of freedom with which he endowed created beings. But his response to moral evil is an even greater act of love through the sending of his Son who offers his life to bring us back to God. The journey through the Triduum is a journey through sin, death and new life.

Holy Thursday: The Mass of the Lord's Supper

Do this in memory of me: By the words "Do this in memory of me," Jesus commanded the Apostles and their successors to repeat his actions and words "until he comes again." From earliest times, the Church has remained faithful to this command. Particularly on Sunday, the day of Christ's Resurrection, the faithful has gathered for the Breaking of the Bread. This practice has continued unbroken for two thousand years right up to the present day.



Wash one another's feet: In the Gospel of John, instead of an account of the institution of the Eucharist, there is the narrative of the foot washing (Jn 13:1-20) at the beginning of the Last Supper, which sets the tone of humble service, exemplified by Christ and fulfilled in his death on the Cross. The Church has selected this Gospel for the Holy Thursday liturgy, highlighting Christ's teaching: "If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do" (Jn 13:14-15).

Good Friday: Passion and Death of the Lord

No mass is offered on Good Friday.

Stations of the Cross are prayed as a community at noon.

Good Friday Service: At 3 pm (and again at 7 pm) a communion service is held where the Passion is read once again. We pray for the world and we reverence the cross. We then depart for our homes.

Why? Good Friday reminds us that on the Cross, Jesus freely gave his life as a sacrifice.



- His sacrifice was an act of **atonement**, that is, it makes us one again with God by the power of divine mercy extending to us the Father's forgiveness of our sins.
- His sacrifice is also called an act of **satisfaction or reparation** because he lives out fully the Father's call to human beings to be faithful to his plan for them, thus overcoming the power of sin.
- It is also an **expiation** for our sins, which in the understanding of Scripture means that God takes the initiative in bringing about reconciliation to himself. In the words of Christian Tradition, Jesus' sacrifice merits salvation for us because it retains forever the power to draw us to him and to the Father.

➤ **Are the Jews responsible for the death of Jesus?**

Every one of us from the dawn of history to the end of time who in pride and disobedience has sinned is in some way responsible for Jesus' death. Historically, some Jewish leaders handed Jesus over to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor who condemned Jesus to death on the Cross. It is wrong to blame the Jewish people for the death of Christ in the manner that often has been done in history. " At the Second Vatican Council, the Church made the following declaration regarding the Jewish people: Neither all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his Passion.... [T]he Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed as if this followed from holy Scripture. (CCC, no. 597; citing Second Vatican Council, Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions [Nostra Aetate; NA], no. 4)

➤ **Why did Jesus descend into hell after his death?**

Jesus actually experienced death. The Apostles' Creed professes that after his death and burial, Jesus descended into hell. In the language of the early Church, this meant that Jesus went into the realm of the dead, from which he called out all the just people who had lived before him to enter with him into the glory of the Kingdom of Heaven. A popular icon of the Eastern Churches pictures the risen Jesus with his hands reaching into the realm of the dead to draw out Adam and Eve. Remember Bishop Barron reminds us that there were a lot of different ways of thinking about death prior to the Resurrection. There still are.



Holy Saturday

As on Good Friday, there is no Mass offered for Holy Saturday. The Easter Vigil Mass, which takes place after sundown on Holy Saturday, properly belongs to Easter Sunday, since liturgically, each day begins at sundown on the previous day. (That is why Saturday vigil Masses can fulfill our Sunday duty.) No mass is offered on Holy Saturday. Eucharist is only available for the dying. *This is called viaticum.* The Triduum fast continues, but in a lighter manner. Our feasting starts on Easter.

Easter and the Vigil

Death and Resurrection

Christ's Resurrection is an object of faith in that it is a transcendent intervention of God himself in creation and history. —CCC, no. 648 When we speak of the Paschal Mystery, we refer to Christ's death and Resurrection as one inseparable event. It is a mystery because it is a visible sign of an invisible act of God. It is paschal (Passover) because it is Christ's passing through death into new life. For us it means that we can now die to sin and its domination of our lives, and we pass over into divine life already here on earth and more completely in heaven. Death is conquered in the sense that not only do our souls survive physical death, but even our bodies will rise again at the end of time at the Last Judgment and resurrection of the dead.

The Resurrection narratives in all four Gospels—though differing in details because of varying viewpoints of the different authors—maintain a similar structure in the narration of the events. At dawn on the Sunday after Christ's death, Mary Magdalene and a companion go to the tomb to anoint the dead body of Jesus. They find the tomb is empty. They meet an angel who proclaims the Resurrection of Jesus: "He is not here, for he has been raised" (Mt 28:6). They are told to bring the Good News to the Apostles. Mary Magdalene leads the way and is celebrated in the liturgy of the Church as the first witness to the Resurrection. Next come the appearance narratives when Jesus appears to the Apostles and disciples in a number of instances.



St. Paul summarizes these appearances in his first Letter to the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor 15:3-8). Finally, the disciples are commissioned to bring the Gospel to the world. While the empty tomb of itself does not prove the Resurrection, since the absence of Christ's body could have other explanations, it is an essential part of the proclamation of the Resurrection because it

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demonstrates the fact of what God has done in raising his Son from the dead in his own body. When St. John entered the empty tomb, "He saw and believed" (Jn 20:8).

HISTORICAL EVENT

e Resurrection is historical in that it actually took place at a specific time and place, and therefore there were witnesses to its impact. Mary Magdalene met the Risen Christ and embraced his feet. Thomas the Apostle saw Jesus and the wounds and said, "My Lord and my God" (Jn 20:28). Two disciples walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus and recognized him in the Breaking of the Bread (Lk 24:13-35). All the Apostles saw him (cf. Jn 20:19-23). St. Paul tells us he met the Risen Lord on the Road to Damascus (cf. Acts 9:3-6). He also writes that five hundred people saw Jesus on a single occasion (cf. 1 Cor 15:3-8). None of the witnesses to Jesus' Resurrection expected it. In fact, they were demoralized by the execution of Jesus. Even when they did see him, some had lingering doubts. "When they saw him, they worshiped him, but they doubted" (Mt 28:17). In other words, they were not easily convinced, nor were they caught up in some kind of mystical self-delusion or hysteria. Some of them even died as martyrs rather than deny what they had witnessed. In this light, their testimony that the Resurrection was a historical event is more convincing (cf. CCC, nos. 643-644).

A TRANSCENDENT EVENT!

The reality of Christ's Resurrection is also something beyond the realm of history. No one saw the actual Resurrection. No evangelist describes it. No one can tell us how it physically happened. No one perceived how the earthly body of Christ passed over into a glorified form. Despite the fact that the risen Jesus could be seen, touched, heard, and dined with, the Resurrection remains a mystery of faith that transcends history. Its transcendent quality can also be inferred from the state of Christ's risen body.

- He was not a ghost; Jesus invited them to touch him.
- He asked for a piece of fish to show them that he could eat.
- He spent time with them, often repeating teachings from the days before the Passion but now in the light of the Resurrection.
- Nor was it a body like that of Lazarus, which would die again. His risen body would never die. Christ's body was glorified; it is not confined by space or time. He could appear and disappear before the Apostles' eyes. Closed doors did not bar his entry. It is a real body, but glorified, not belonging to earth but to the Father's realm. It is a body transformed by the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 15:42-44).

- The Holy Spirit “gave life to Jesus’ dead humanity and called it to the glorious state of Lordship” (CCC, no. 648).

St. Paul leaves no doubt about the reality of the Resurrection

St. Paul makes this clear in his first Letter to the Corinthians: “But if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then neither has Christ been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then empty, too, is our preaching; empty, too, your faith” (1 Cor 15:12-14). We also learn that, by raising him from the dead, the Father has placed his seal upon the work accomplished by his only begotten Son through his Passion and death. We see now the fullness of Jesus’ glory as Son of God and Savior.

After Easter: Mystagogy and Sunday

Mystagogy

From Easter to Pentecost, there is a period of postbaptismal catechesis, or Mystagogy. This is a time for the neophytes, or newly initiated, along with the members of the parish to come closer together as a faith community to examine more deeply the Gospel, to share in the Eucharist, and to do works of charity. During this joyful time, the neophytes’ enthusiasm can inspire the faithful

Sunday

Every seven days, the Church celebrates the Easter mystery. This tradition goes back to the time of the Apostles. It takes its origin from the actual day of Christ’s Resurrection.

- Sunday extends the celebration of Easter throughout the year. It is meant to be illumined by the glory of the Risen Christ.
- Sunday makes present the new creation brought about by Christ.
- Sunday also recalls the creation of the world. The Genesis account of creation, expressed in poetic style, is a hymn of awe and adoration of God in the presence of the immensity of creation.

For Discussion

1. How is Jesus revealed as priest, prophet and king in the Triduum and Easter?
2. How does baptism enable you to share in Jesus Christ, priest, prophet and king?
3. What difference does it make in your life choices?
4. What other views of death have you heard besides a bodily resurrection?
5. When does your experience of the Resurrection begin?
6. Do you think anti-Semitism is on the rise again? If so, why?