



COFFEE & CONVERSATION

April 9, 2019



Holy Week

Holy Week in Christianity is the week just before Easter. It is also the last week of Lent, in the West, – Palm Sunday, Holy Wednesday (Spy Wednesday), Maundy Thursday (Holy Thursday), Good Friday (Holy Friday), and Holy Saturday – are all included. The liturgical gatherings of Holy Week and Easter Day attract the biggest crowds of the year. Many cultures have different traditions like Easter eggs, floats, sculptures of Christ's life, arrest and burial and contributing to the Great Feasts, to echo the theme of resurrection.



The earliest allusion to the custom of marking this week as a whole with special observances dates from the latter half of the 3rd century and 4th century. Today, in the Western Christian Church, among Lutherans, Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians and Catholics, the liturgies used for Holy Week are nearly identical.

Palm Sunday

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday, which may also be known as Passion Sunday in some denominations. Traditionally, Palm Sunday commemorates the Triumphal entry into Jerusalem described in all four canonical gospels. As described in the accounts, Jesus's entry into Jerusalem was noted by the crowds present who shouted praises and waved palm branches.

Holy Monday to Spy Wednesday

The days between Palm Sunday and Holy Thursday are known as Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday, and Spy Wednesday (Holy Wednesday). The Gospel accounts are not always clear or in agreement on the events which occurred on these days, though there are traditional observances held by some denominations to commemorate certain events from the last days of Jesus' life. Among them

- On **Holy Monday**, some observe the anointing of Jesus at Bethany, an event that in the Gospel of John occurred before the Palm Sunday event described in John 12:12–19. Other events which the Gospels tell of which may have occurred on this day include cursing the fig tree and the Cleansing of the Temple.
- On **Holy Tuesday**, some observe Jesus' predictions of his own death, as described in John 12:20–36 and John 13:21–38. (In the extraordinary form of the Roman rite, the Passion according to St. Mark is read instead.)
- On **Spy Wednesday**, some observe the story of Judas arranging his betrayal of Jesus with the high priests. For this reason, the day is sometimes called Spy Wednesday. Other events connected with this date include the events at the house of Simon the Leper, especially the anointing of

Jesus by Mary of Bethany, the events of which directly preceded the betrayal by Judas to the Sanhedrin.

Maundy Thursday

Maundy Thursday (also known as Holy Thursday) commemorates the Last Supper, where Christ lays out the model for the Eucharist or Holy Communion. During the meal, Jesus predicted the events that would immediately follow, including his betrayal, the Denial of Peter, and his death and resurrection. Events of the last supper play varying roles in commemoration services depending on the denomination. The word “Maundy” is derived through Middle English and Old French *mandé*, from the Latin *mandatum* – meaning commandment, recalling the new commandment given by Jesus to love one another as he loved, to serve one another as he served...echoing back to when he washed the feet of his disciples.

Good Friday

Good Friday commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus and his subsequent death. Commemorations of often solemn and mournful, many denominations use Good Friday to perform the Stations of the Cross, or to spend time re-reading the entire story of the crucifixion. The title “good” points to the paradox of the death of Christ as the best good news for the world.

Holy Saturday Friday

Holy Saturday is the day between the crucifixion of Jesus and his resurrection. As the Sabbath day, the Gospel accounts all note that Jesus was hurriedly buried in a cave tomb after his crucifixion, with the intent to finish proper embalming and burial ceremonies on Sunday, after the Sabbath had ended, as the Sabbath day prohibitions would have prevented observant Jews from completing a proper burial. While daytime services of the day are rare in the Western tradition, after sundown on Holy Saturday is the traditional time for **Easter Vigil**: one of the longest and most solemn of liturgical services. It lasts up to three or four hours, in which the light of Christ is relit from a fire kindled outside the sanctuary, following readings that depict the overall story of God’s salvation work in creation baptisms are done of new members and communion is served. Tradition holds that this is finished before the light of dawn arrives.

Easter Day

Easter Day, which immediately follows Holy Week and begins with the Easter Vigil, is the great feast day and apogee of the Christian liturgical year: on this day the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is celebrated. It is the first day of the new season of the Great Fifty Days, or Eastertide, which runs from Easter Day to Pentecost Sunday. The Resurrection of Christ on Easter Day is the main reason why Christians keep every Sunday as the primary day of religious observance.

Thinking about Holy Week...

- How do you mark the celebration of the great or holy week in your faith practice?
- The great week is about retelling and re-entering the story of the Passion of Jesus. What does that mean for you? Do you have a particular day/part of the story/ that touches you?
- If a friend came to you to ask you what Holy Week is all about?;... or what’s the deal with palm cuttings?; or what a Maundy is?... or why Friday is good when it’s the day of Jesus’ death?; or what it means to take up your own cross?; what colored eggs have to do with Jesus?
... how would you answer?