

*Beginning with the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, the Church concludes its observance of Lent and begins the PASCHAL TRIDUUM. The Paschal Triduum, as its name suggests, is a three-day celebration of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. It is also a three-day celebration of our passage with Christ from death to risen*

*life. Three principal celebrations mark these days: the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, the Solemn Celebration of the Passion on Good Friday, and the great Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday evening.*

### **HOLY THURSDAY**

*On Holy Thursday we gather in the evening to celebrate the Mass of the Lord's Supper. At this celebration we commemorate the institution of the Eucharist and the profound meaning it has for us as followers of Christ. At the beginning of our celebration blessed oils are presented to our parish community. These oils are blessed by our bishop during the Chrism Mass at the Cathedral in Hamilton. The holy chrism consecrated by the bishop is used to anoint the newly-baptized, to seal the faithful in confirmation, and to anoint the hands of priests and the heads of bishops at their ordination. In addition, the chrism is used in the rites associated with the dedication of churches and altars. The oil of catechumens is used to bring strength to those preparing for baptism. The oil of the sick is used to bring comfort and support to the sick in their infirmity. Before we listen to God's word, we unite our voices and sing the great Easter hymn of praise:*

# *Understanding Holy Week*



*Glory to God in the highest. This hymn was first sung on Easter morning in Syria during the fourth century. It is a fitting way to enter into the spirit of the great three days. Following the Gospel proclamation, one of the most ancient and most moving of the Church's rites takes place. In John's account of the Last Supper, which is proclaimed on Holy Thursday, the action of Jesus which is highlighted is not the taking, blessing, breaking and giving of bread, and the sharing of the common cup, but the washing of feet. For the community of John, it is this action which expresses the deepest meaning of the eucharist - that we show our love in humble service. While some may see this as a somewhat outdated ritual, it is a powerful sign which points to the inner dynamic of the Christian life: our mutual love for God and one another. At the conclusion of the Holy Thursday liturgy, we form a procession to transfer the Eucharistic elements to the chapel where we are invited to spend some time in prayer and adoration of the sacrament. Our time of silent prayer and adoration is a testimony of our belief in the abiding presence of Christ in the sacrament of the eucharist and our gratitude for this enduring gift of God.*

# *Understanding Holy Week*

## *GOOD FRIDAY*

*The church assembles again in silence on Good Friday to continue our celebration of the Lord's death and resurrection. During the solemn celebration of the passion, we listen attentively to the story of the Lord's passion and death. At several points in the proclamation of this dramatic story, we acclaim Christ who gave his life for us out of love. In response to the word of God, we offer intercessions for the Church and for the world. As we recall the needs of all humanity, we recognize that Christ gave his life for the salvation of all. Following the prayer, the veneration of the cross takes place. As each person comes forward to show a sign of love and reverence for the cross, we honour Christ who gave his life on the cross for us. Christians have done this as an act of faith since at least the fourth century. Finally, we once again seal our union with Christ crucified and risen for us by receiving communion from the reserved sacrament.*

## *EASTER VIGIL*

*The highpoint of the celebration of the Paschal Triduum takes place on Holy Saturday night during the Easter Vigil. After dusk, we assemble around a fire outside the church. We bless the fire and light the new Easter Candle. (This candle remains lit during all celebrations throughout the fifty days of Easter and is lighted when we celebrate baptisms and funerals during the year. It is a continual reminder of the presence of Christ who enlightens our minds and hearts with goodness.)*

*From this candle each person's taper is lighted. The darkness of the night is transformed by the radiance of Christ's glory as all process into the church. When all are in place, the Easter Proclamation (Exsultet) is sung. Standing in the light of the Easter Candle, the Church unites its voice with all creation in giving praise to God for our salvation in Christ.*

*Following the service of light, the word of God is proclaimed. We listen to the story of our salvation recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures, beginning with Genesis and continuing through the words of the prophets. We spend time in silence pondering each of these stories of our faith and we respond in song to God's saving deeds.*

*Following the final reading from the Old Testament, we once again take up the Easter song of praise: Glory to God in the Highest. A passage from Paul's Letter to the Romans is then proclaimed. We are reminded that as Christ went into the tomb and died and was raised from the dead, so also did we in baptism. The festive sound of the Easter Alleluia then fills the church as the Book of the Gospels is carried solemnly in procession to the ambo where the Gospel announcing the resurrection is proclaimed.*

*Following the homily, the Sacraments of Christian Initiation are celebrated. Those whom God has called to the Easter sacraments are presented for initiation. The Litany of Saints is sung as we prepare to ask God's blessing on the waters of the font.*

# Understanding Holy Week

The Sacrament of Baptism is celebrated. The elect are invited to renounce Satan and all the powers of evil and to make a profession of faith. They are baptised, clothed with the garment of salvation, and presented with candles lighted from the Easter Candle. Then the entire community renews its baptismal promises and is sprinkled with water in memory of their new birth in water and in spirit. Christians of other traditions who seek to be one with us at the eucharistic table make a profession of faith at this time and are received into full communion. The Sacrament of Confirmation is then celebrated with the new members of our Catholic community.

Following the Prayers of the Faithful, in which the newly baptized participate for the first time, the gifts of bread and wine are presented and the table is set for the festive Easter Eucharist. For the first time, the neophytes (those newly-baptized) will join us at the Lord's table. This is the highpoint of their journey of faith; it is the highpoint of our journey too. We are baptized and confirmed so that we can take our place at the table of the Eucharist. What a fitting way to bring our three day celebration to a conclusion!

## EASTER SUNDAY

On Easter Sunday we continue to express our joy and thanksgiving for the gift of our new life in Christ. We recall his death and resurrection, his ascension into glory and the gift of his Spirit poured out on the Church. As we assemble for the Eucharist again on this day which we call the Lord's Day we remember our initiation in to his death and resurrection. We renew our baptismal promises and celebrate the Eucharist with hearts renewed and overflowing with joy.

During the Fifty days of Easter, we continue to express our joy and gratitude to God for our salvation in Christ. We celebrate the sacraments of Christian initiation with our young people and look forward to the celebration of Pentecost - the feast of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the "Birthday of the Church".



## Triduum

