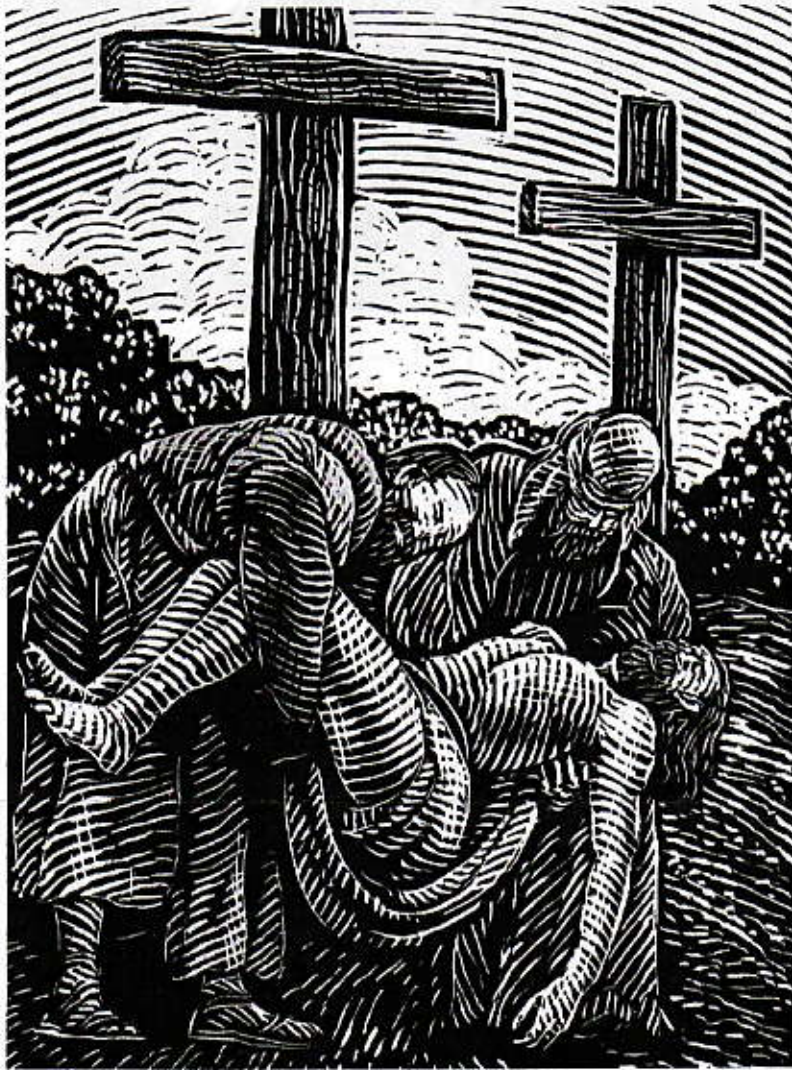


# Holy Week



## Prayer for Holy Week

Gracious God,  
the people of Jerusalem waving  
palm branches,  
sang their praises of your Son  
and of a kingship they did not understand.

In this holiest of weeks,  
give us grace to know your kingdom,  
a kingdom of humility and compassion,  
a kingdom of love and justice.

Let us walk with your Son  
on the road to his Passion,  
mindful of the love he felt for his disciples,  
the forgiveness he offered to those who  
crucified him,  
and the care he gave to all creation.

In these holy days,  
let us draw nearer to him every day.  
We ask this through the same Christ, our  
Lord. Amen.

March 28, 2010  
Servant of God

Palm Sunday marks the beginning of the holiest week of the Christian year, culminating in the Triduum, which will begin with the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday and last until Easter Sunday. Today's readings tell the Passion story in a condensed form. In the procession Gospel (Luke 19:28-40), we hear the joy of the people as they hail what they hope will be a conquering hero. Most believed that the messiah would free Israel from any who oppressed them. By the end of the Passion reading (Luke 11:14-23:56), we know that Jesus was not a king in that way, nor was he the warrior for whom many had hoped. Rather, he was the servant of God who suffered for the sins of the world, and

who, by that act, restored to wholeness the relationship between God and his people. From the description of kingship in Deuteronomy 17, Jesus was a king whose duty was not to make laws or wage war, but to show us by example what it means to be obedient to the word of God. Still, it is hard to give up expectations, even when confronted with something better. The same people who hailed Jesus at his entry call for his crucifixion at the end. The Gospel ends with the burial of Jesus and gives us time to reflect on the "wondrous love" of God, that he would send his Son to die for us.

# This Week at Home



## Monday, March 29

### The Chrism Mass

In every diocese during Holy Week, the diocesan cathedral will host the chrism Mass. At this liturgy the sacred oils used in Baptism, Confirmation, Ordination, and the Anointing of the Sick are prepared and blessed for the use of every church of the diocese during the year. At the end of the liturgy, representatives of each parish come forward to receive their share of the oils for their church. The Mass is a wonderful reminder that we are not individual congregations, but all members of one body.

## Tuesday, March 30

### Giving Thanks for Our Servant Priests

During the chrism Mass, diocesan priests everywhere gather with their brother priests in the cathedral to renew their promises to serve God and his Church. Diocesan priests have a special charism, or gift to serve the people of a particular place. This liturgy becomes an opportunity to offer thanks for the ministry of diocesan priests everywhere.

## Wednesday, March 31

### *Tenebrae*

In the last decade, many churches have begun to revive a special prayer service known as *Tenebrae* (from the Latin word for *shadows*, because the service is celebrated at night by candlelight). Originally this was the monastic office known as Matins, which included psalms, canticles, and readings from the Passion. Adaptations gather readings and music which help people reflect on the Crucifixion, the sacrifice of Jesus, and the sinfulness of the world. At the prayer's climax, the church is in darkness until the return of one lone candle representing Christ.

## Thursday, April 1—Saturday, April 3

### Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday

The Triduum begins with the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday evening and ends on Easter Sunday with the celebration of Vespers. These are the holiest days of the Christian calendar when we remember in detail the Passion, death, and Resurrection of Jesus. To these acts of love, we owe our redeemed lives, and so they are commemorated in an extended prayer that opens with the Mass of the Lord's Supper and includes the washing of the feet—Jesus' call to service. As we witness the priest ritually washing feet in the liturgy, we all consider whose feet we are called to wash in our daily lives—and also we think about who is washing our feet. The service ends in silence with the stripping of the altar as the consecrated elements are removed to a side chapel for adoration.

Adoration can extend from a few hours to overnight. The church is left bare and statues are covered, a stark reminder of the Passion. On Good Friday, after praying individually during the day, the congregation returns to pray communally at the celebration of the Lord's Passion. John's version of the Passion is read and extended Prayers of the Faithful remind us of all who need God's love. Communion is distributed from hosts consecrated the night before, and people leave in silence once again. Saturday is again a day for individual prayer until the congregation gathers for the great Easter Vigil. In darkness, the new fire is lit and the flame is shared, candle to candle, with all present. We hear the proclamation of the Exsultet and we listen to the story of salvation. A highlight of the Vigil is the Baptism and Confirmation of adults who have undergone a period of preparation and will join the community in the sacrament of Eucharist for the first time. The celebration will continue on Easter Sunday.

