



# What's What

*A weekly communication that provides an opportunity for our faith community to grow together in faith.*

## The Sacred Triduum

Originally there was no Holy Week... [Everything] was celebrated in the context of a single day: the Easter Vigil. It began with sunset on the Sabbath evening and continued until dawn on the first day of the week or Sunday. By the 5th century, this Pascal Mystery had been broken down into its historical pieces, partly under the influence of borrowing from Jerusalem. The nucleus was called the Sacred Triduum (Latin, "three days"): Friday until Easter morning. It remembered the death, burial, and resurrection. Later, Holy Thursday was included because all days were reckoned from sunset of the previous evening...

### **Holy Thursday**

The oldest and still official name of this day is Thursday of the Lord's Supper. It commemorates the historical gospel events surrounding the Last Supper and the institution of the Holy Eucharist. Maundy Thursday, another popular title in English-speaking countries, comes from the solemn ritual of washing of feet in imitation of Jesus at his Last Supper. The title is a corruption of *mandatum* (Latin, "commandment") from the words of Jesus as the washing begins: "A new commandment I give you..." (John 13:34).

Originally Holy Thursday was a practical preparation for the three-day celebration of the Pascal Mystery rather than a part of it. On this day repentant sinners were absolved and re-incorporated into the parish community so that they could participate in the paschal festivities...

### **Good Friday**

Good Friday is the anniversary of the death of Jesus on the cross just outside the walls of Jerusalem. This moment will be completed the following day as the Saturday night hours change into Sunday and death turns into resurrection. The origin of the term "Good" in the title of this day is unknown, but probably emphasizes the saving value of the historical event of the crucifixion of Jesus. Another theory is that it is a corruption of "God's" Friday. The theme of this day throughout history has been one of quiet sadness and mourning for the crucified and dead Jesus.

On this one day of the year the Eucharist is not celebrated in the usual form of the Mass. During the first centuries no Eucharist was celebrated on weekdays. This customary absence of weekday Eucharist took on special meaning for Good Friday when the sacrificial dimension of the Mass began to be emphasized. The absence of Mass respects the historical sacrificial action of Jesus on the cross. Consequently, the church emphasized a liturgy of the word with a reading of the passion narrative and psalms prophesying the suffering of Jesus...

### **Easter Vigil**

An annual celebration of the Lord's resurrection goes back to the first generation of Christianity. For the first three centuries this was the only feast observed throughout the church. This original celebration of what would become Easter was done by way of a vigil (Latin *vigilia*, "a watch,"

or "waiting"). It was natural that Christians chose the night hours to celebrate their religious experience of Christ victorious over death and sin and their victory along with his. It was during those dark hours, turning into the first day of the week (Sunday), that this mystery had occurred (Mat 28:11; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1; John 20:1).

It was a common belief in early Christianity that the risen Lord would return during these night hours of the Easter Vigil. It was natural, therefore, that all be present and waiting. This would be his final and glorious coming, and the end of time still proclaimed today with faith during each Mass: "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again!"

With some modifications, especially in length, today's renewed ritual echoes that of early centuries. As soon as the evening star became visible, the night-long ritual began. The first hours were spent in Scripture readings and prayers. The readings from Scripture, usually twelve in all, emphasized a prophetic theme of new creation and salvation through water...By the 5th century, in the Roman church, a second anointing, or chrismation, was done by the bishop. This would evolve into the sacrament of confirmation

During the first centuries it was a tradition to give blessed milk and honey to those newly baptized. This gesture symbolized that the newly baptized were infants in the faith, called neophytes. It also symbolized their having just crossed over into the new Promised Land flowing with milk and honey...

Issue 16 — The Triduum

March 16, 2008

### *Things to talk about:*

- Which parts of the Triduum have you taken part in before?
- What do you remember about it?
- Are you planning on attending any part of the Triduum this year?

Finally, as the hours of vigil approached dawn, the newly baptized shared the Eucharist for the first time with the community of believers...

The impressive blessing and lighting of the Easter fire, which still begins the vigil today, was not part of the ritual in ancient times.. During the 6th & 7th centuries Irish missionaries brought the tradition of blessing a bonfire outside of the church on Holy Saturday night. This tradition had been started by St Patrick to counter the influence of the spring pagan bonfires among the Celtic Druids. The tradition spread to Rome and eventually was incorporated into the liturgy of the Easter Vigil.

The lighting of a new Easter fire also had a practical purpose. The lamps in the church used to be extinguished Holy Thursday night. Consequently, a new fire had to be lit for the celebrant and readers to see by.

*Catholic Customs & Traditions,*  
Greg Dues, 2000, 23rd Pub



## Saint in the Spotlight — Saint Patrick (415?-493?)

Legends about Patrick abound; but truth is best served by our seeing two solid qualities in him: He was humble and he was courageous. The determination to accept suffering and success with equal indifference guided the life of God's instrument for winning most of Ireland for Christ.

Details of his life are uncertain. Current research places his dates of birth and death a little later than earlier accounts. Patrick may have been born in Dunbarton, Scotland, Cumberland, England, or in northern Wales. He called himself both a Roman and a Briton. At 16, he and a large number of his father's slaves and vassals were captured by Irish raiders and sold as slaves in Ireland. Forced to work as a shepherd, he suffered greatly from hunger and cold.

After six years, Patrick escaped, probably to France, and later returned to Britain at the age of 22. His captivity had meant spiritual conversion. He may have studied at Lerins, off the French coast; he spent years at Auxerre, France, and was consecrated bishop at the age of 43. His great desire was to proclaim the Good News to the Irish.

In a dream vision it seemed "all the children of Ireland from

their mothers' wombs were stretching out their hands" to him. He understood the vision to be a call to do mission work in pagan Ireland. Despite opposition from those who felt his education had been defective, he was sent to carry out the task. He went to the west and north, where the faith had never been preached, obtained the protection of local kings and made numerous converts.

Because of the island's pagan background, Patrick was emphatic in encouraging widows to remain chaste and young women to consecrate their virginity to Christ. He ordained many priests, divided the country into dioceses, held Church councils, founded several monasteries and continually urged his people to greater holiness in Christ.

He suffered much opposition from pagan druids, and was criticized in both England

and Ireland for the way he conducted his mission.

In a relatively short time the island had experienced deeply the Christian spirit, and was prepared to send out missionaries whose efforts were greatly responsible for Christianizing Europe.

Patrick was a man of action, with little inclination toward learning. He had a rocklike belief in his vocation, in the cause he had espoused.

One of the few certainly authentic writings is his Confessio, above all an act of homage to God for having called Patrick, unworthy sinner, to the apostolate.

There is hope rather than irony in the fact that his burial place is said to be in strife-torn Ulster, in County Down.

*www.americancatholic.org/Features/SaintOfDay*



### Want to know more?

Would you like to know more about the Triduum? Check out the following website and book for more info:

- [Catholic Customs & Traditions](#), Greg Dues, Twenty-Third Publications, 2000
- <http://www.catholic.org/featured/headline.php?ID=3203>
- <http://www.catholic.org/featured/headline.php?ID=852>

*These are just suggestions. In providing these we assume no responsibility for, nor do we necessarily endorse these.*

"What's What" is a publication of the Youth Ministry Department of St Mary, Canandaigua, and St Bridget, Bloomfield.

Our Youth Ministry Mission Statement [Draft]:

Building on the mission of our parishes to follow the way of Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to make Christ more fully present in all who live within our community, the Youth Ministry mission is to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today; to affirm the gifts of our youth and provide opportunities for young people to share their gifts with the larger community; and to meet the religious, spiritual and social needs of all youth with the committed leadership, guidance and support of our parish family, providing an opportunity for our entire faith community to grow together in Christian faith.

### Triduum Rituals

Lent comes to an end before the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday. That liturgy begins the Triduum, the great Three Days that celebrate the central mystery of our faith. Triduum rituals invite us all to baptismal renewal, par excellence. Here are some examples.

**Washing of Feet:** After the homily on Holy Thursday, we imitate our master in the washing of feet. This ritual reminds us that our baptismal commitment means we are to be servants of one another. In the time of St. Ambrose in Milan, those who were baptized also had their feet washed, because of Jesus' words to Peter: "Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed" (Jn 13:10). Many scholars have seen a baptismal reference in those words.

**Veneration of the Cross:** As part of our observance of Good Friday, we venerate the cross on which Christ died. The veneration challenges us to be willing to accept the cross, too, for it is the only way to resurrection. Through Baptism, we shared in Christ's death that we might come to new life. Every year we are called to deepen our identification with his cross and resurrection.

**Waters of Baptism:** The core of our celebration of the Easter Vigil is the Baptism of the elect. As we share in their joy on this holy night, we are all called to renew our own baptismal promises, to live in the joy of life in the Risen One. Lent comes to its fulfillment around the waters of the font.

*by Rev. Lawrence E. Mick*

<http://www.americancatholic.org/newsletters/CU/ac0302.asp#F8>