

17th April 2019

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS OF THE EASTER TRIDUUM

1. Maundy Thursday: Chrism Mass – 18th April, 9:15 a.m.

This is the only Mass celebrated on the morning of Maundy Thursday by the Archbishop and the priests of the Archdiocese of Malta. This Mass is celebrated at St John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta. This Mass underscores the unity willed by Jesus Christ among believers, especially those who have been entrusted to continue his mission. During this Mass, the priests renew their priestly promises taken at their ordination as a sign of their commitment to remain in unity among themselves and with their bishop. The bishop also blesses three oils — the oil of catechumens, the oil of the infirm, and holy chrism — which will be used in the administration of the sacraments throughout the diocese until next year's Maundy Thursday.

2. Maundy Thursday: The Solemn Commemoration of the Lord's Supper – 20th April, 6:30 p.m.

The Solemn Commemoration of the Lord's Supper begins sometime after sunset, when night is approaching. During this Mass, the Church commemorates the Institution of the Eucharist and the institution of the Ministerial Priesthood. The liturgy is celebrated in four stages:

- i. Liturgy of the Word
- ii. Washing of the Feet
- iii. Liturgy of the Eucharist
- iv. Procession to the place of Eucharistic Adoration

Today's celebration is recalls the Institution of the Eucharist and ministerial priesthood in the context of the Easter Triduum; commencing and processing through the three days, almost hour by hour, the mystery of the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord. This is the reason why the Church encourages us not to give all our attention to spend time in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament — solemn adorations are held

only until midnight — but we are urged to reflect on what was started at the Upper Room, fulfilled on the Golgotha and reached its summit in the Resurrection on Easter Sunday. During this Mass, after the Homily, the celebrant washes the feet of twelve representatives of the community as a symbolic gesture fulfilling the command of Jesus to his disciples as reported in Chapter 13 of the Gospel according to John, a symbolic gesture which emphasises the attitude we should have towards each other, an attitude of love expressed in concrete gratuitous service.

3. Good Friday: The Solemn Commemoration of the Passion and death of the Lord – 19th April, 3:30 p.m.

The Solemn Commemoration of the Passion and death of the Lord takes place around three o'clock in the afternoon, so that the faithful grasp the significance of living moment by moment the most important times of the Mystery of our Salvation. The significance of this event is emphasised by the darkness in the church, the lack of use of musical instruments, the silence, and the dramatic gestures used almost only during this liturgical action. The simplicity of the liturgical acts unfolding before our eyes adds drama to the proceedings and thus helps us to reflect upon these sacred moments in the life of Jesus. This is why no musical instruments are used during the liturgy, only voices. There are several moments of silence throughout the liturgy - when the liturgy starts with the priests processing to the altar and prostrating themselves for a few moments in silent prayer, the silence pauses between the intercessory prayers, during the entrance of the Cross for Veneration, when the bare altar is being prepared for the distribution of the Eucharist, after communion the altar is stripped again in silence, and when the priests are processing out of the church into the sacristy. These moments are purposely woven in the liturgy to help the faithful reflect and pray. The liturgy is celebrated in three parts:

- i. Liturgy of the Word and General Intercessions
- ii. Adoration of the Cross
- iii. Holy Communion

Only on Good Friday only, after the Liturgical Action, the faithful are encouraged to genuflect before the cross as the means on which the Lord brought to us Salvation.

4. Holy Saturday: Easter Vigil – 20th April, 8:00 p.m.

The Easter Vigil is held in the hours of darkness between sunset on Holy Saturday and sunrise on Easter Day. In participating in this holy Vigil, the central Night of the entire Liturgical Year, we announce to the world the resurrection of the Lord. The Liturgy of Baptism where water is blessed with the Paschal candle, not only cathecumens baptised, but all of us recall our baptism and the commitment taken, to be followers of Christ and light of the world.

Together with the evening commemorations of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, today's celebration is the fulcrum of the entire liturgical year because during the Paschal Triduum the Church relives the mystery of salvation, not in nostalgia or just a remembrance of events that took place two thousand years ago, but because the Christ-event is happening in the here and now. The liturgy begins outside the church around the fire which is blessed and from which later on the Paschal Candle, which previously had been marked with the cross the Alpha and the Omega, and the numbers of the current year, is lit.

The congregation follow the deacon carrying the Paschal candle through the nave of the church, itself in complete darkness, stopping three times to chant the acclamation 'Light of Christ' (*Lumen Christi*), to which the assembly responds 'Thanks be to God'. As the candle proceeds towards the altar, the small candles held by those present are gradually lit from the Paschal candle and the 'light of Christ' dispels darkness. Then Easter is proclaimed and Scripture readings are read. The chant of the Gloria is followed by the Epistle and the solemn proclamation of the 'Alleluia' lead to the proclamation of the Gospel that narrates the Resurrection of Christ from the Gospel, this year, according to Saint Luke. After the conclusions of the Liturgy of the Word with a homily, the Baptismal Liturgy commences with the solemn blessing of the water. Through baptism, the baptised share in divine life. The Liturgy of Baptism ends with the sprinkling of water on the congregation to recall each and everyone's baptism. The Liturgy of Easter Vigil is celebrated in four stages:

- i. The blessing of the fire and the preparation and lighting of the Paschal Candle together with the Easter Proclamation

- ii. The Liturgy of the Word
- iii. The Liturgy of Baptism
- iv. The Liturgy of the Eucharist

5. Easter Sunday: The Resurrection of the Lord - 20th April, 10:30 a.m.

On Easter morning, the Church celebrates the Resurrection of the Lord as a Church that commemorates the rebirth of Man to a new life, in communion with those who believe in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Throughout the day, the Church relives the joyful experience of the disciples after the resurrection of Christ.