

Holy Week

Theme:

Reenacting the Passion of Our Lord

Dates:

Holy Week is the last week of Lent.

Colors:

In most churches, the decorations are red to symbolize the blood of martyrdom. Some churches remove all decorations on Good Friday, veiling anything that can't be removed in black. You can read more about color in worship.

The East:

In the Eastern Church, this is called the Great Week. They have the same celebrations, but the dates are different because they use the Julian calendar to calculate the date of Easter Day.

Special Days:

Palm Sunday (or Passion Sunday).
Holy Thursday (or Maundy Thursday).
Good Friday.
Holy Saturday.

The time from sundown on Holy Thursday to sundown on Easter Day is also known as the *Triduum*, which is Latin for “three days.”

Holy Week is the last week before Easter Day.

Holy Week observances began in Jerusalem in the earliest days of the Church, when devout people traveled to Jerusalem at Passover to reenact the events of the week leading up to the Resurrection.

Egeria was a Christian who traveled widely during the period of 381 to 385 and wrote about Christian customs and observances in Egypt, Palestine, and Asia Minor. She described how religious tourists to Jerusalem reenacted the events of Holy Week. On Palm Sunday afternoon, the crowds waved palm fronds as they made a procession from the Mount of Olives into the city. Of course, the observances must have begun quite a number of years before Egeria witnessed them, or they wouldn't have been so elaborate. It's just that Egeria's description is the earliest we still have. The tourists took the customs home with them. Holy week observances spread to Spain by the fifth century, to Gaul and England by the early seventh century. They didn't spread to Rome until the twelfth century.

The purpose of Holy Week is to reenact, relive, and participate in the passion of Jesus Christ.

Holy Week is the same in the eastern and western Church, but because eastern Christians use the Julian Calendar to calculate Easter, the celebrations occur at different times. However, the following events in the week before Easter are the same, east and west, relative to the date of Easter:

- **Palm Sunday** (or Passion Sunday), the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem.
- **Holy Thursday** (or Maundy Thursday), the institution of Communion and the betrayal by Judas.
- **Good Friday**, the arrest, trial, crucifixion, death, and burial of Jesus Christ.
- **Holy Saturday**, the Sabbath on which Jesus rested in the grave.

Roughly speaking, the western Church consists of Protestants, Catholics, and Anglicans. The eastern Church consists of the Eastern Orthodox churches, the Oriental Orthodox churches, and the eastern-rite churches affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church.
