

A watercolor illustration of a palm branch, rendered in various shades of brown, tan, and muted green. The brushstrokes are expressive and layered, creating a sense of depth and texture. The branch is positioned diagonally across the page, with the top right corner being the most prominent part.

Living **HOLY WEEK**

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Originally published by: The Well



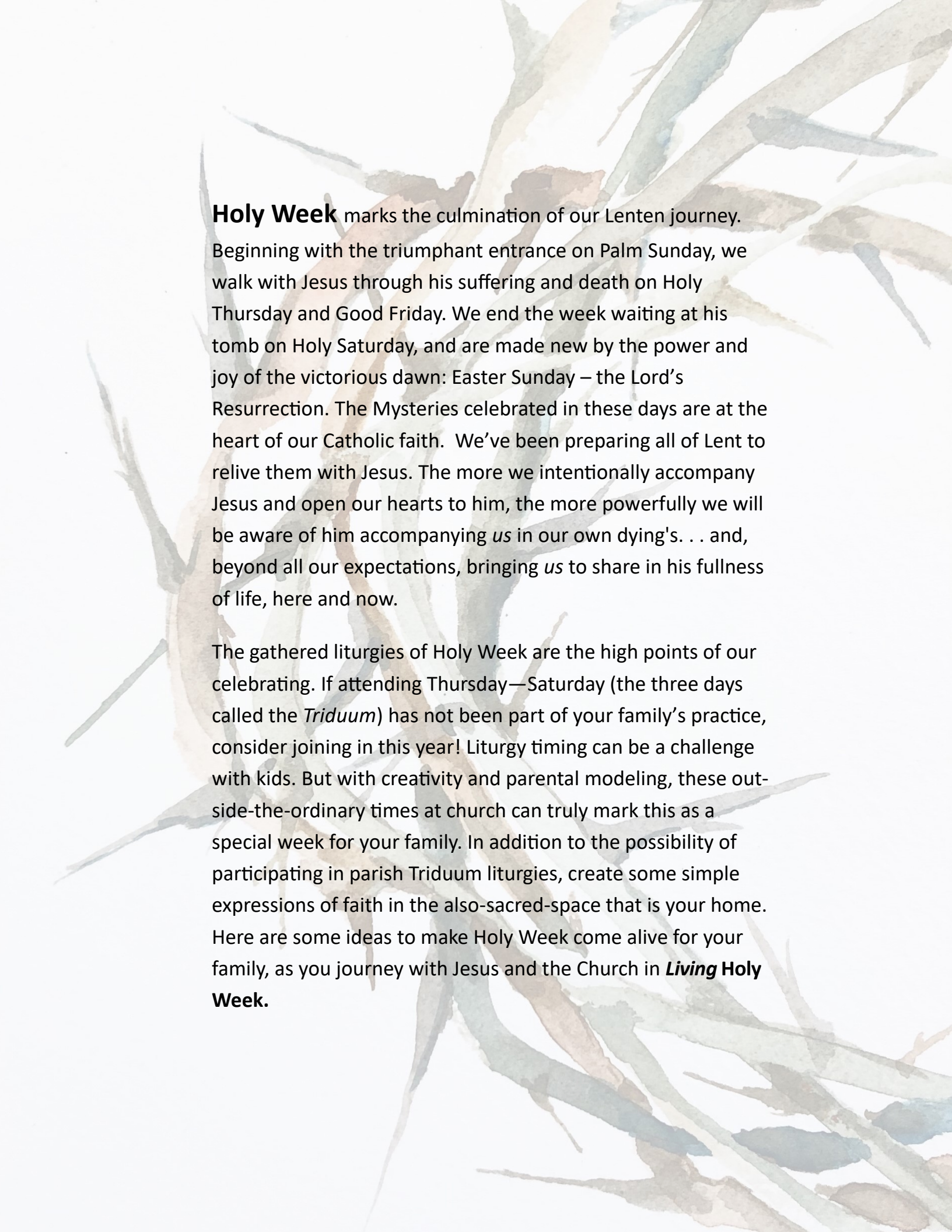
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Holy Week marks the culmination of our Lenten journey.

Beginning with the triumphant entrance on Palm Sunday, we walk with Jesus through his suffering and death on Holy Thursday and Good Friday. We end the week waiting at his tomb on Holy Saturday, and are made new by the power and joy of the victorious dawn: Easter Sunday – the Lord’s Resurrection. The Mysteries celebrated in these days are at the heart of our Catholic faith. We’ve been preparing all of Lent to relive them with Jesus. The more we intentionally accompany Jesus and open our hearts to him, the more powerfully we will be aware of him accompanying *us* in our own dying’s. . . and, beyond all our expectations, bringing *us* to share in his fullness of life, here and now.

The gathered liturgies of Holy Week are the high points of our celebrating. If attending Thursday—Saturday (the three days called the *Triduum*) has not been part of your family’s practice, consider joining in this year! Liturgy timing can be a challenge with kids. But with creativity and parental modeling, these outside-the-ordinary times at church can truly mark this as a special week for your family. In addition to the possibility of participating in parish Triduum liturgies, create some simple expressions of faith in the also-sacred-space that is your home. Here are some ideas to make Holy Week come alive for your family, as you journey with Jesus and the Church in ***Living Holy Week***.

HOLY THURSDAY

The day of Jesus' Last Supper and the first Mass! Jesus gives us his New Commandment: "*Love one another as I have loved you.*" The night Jesus prays very sorrowfully in the Garden of Olives and then is arrested.

Tone for our day:

Joy and thanksgiving for the great gift of the Eucharist.

Sorrow in accompanying Jesus in his agony in the garden.

Staying with him.

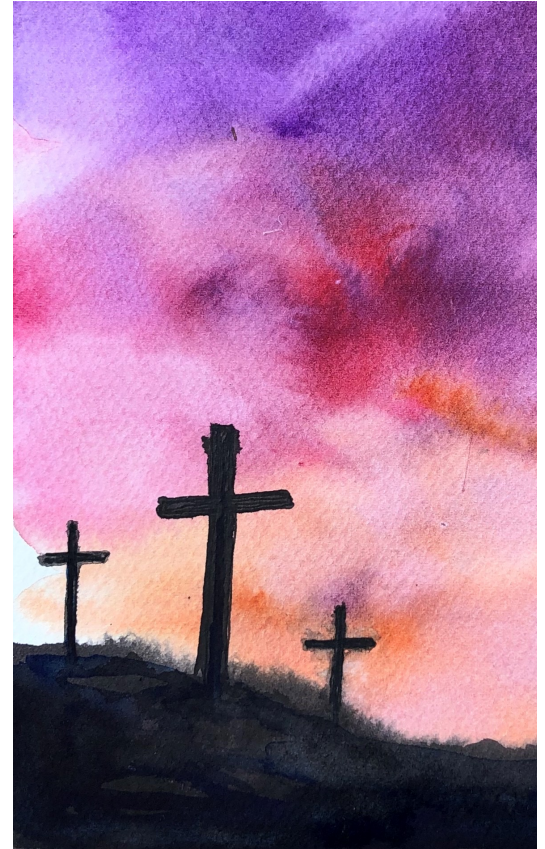
- **Go to Mass** as a family (special parts to watch for: the Gloria with bells, the washing of feet, the transfer of the Eucharist from the altar/tabernacle to an altar of repose.)
- If you are unable to go to Mass (it is not a holy day of obligation), **make a [spiritual communion](#) or [pay a visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament](#)** at church - during the day or during the evening adoration at the altar of repose.
- **Write specific ways of loving** those in your household/neighborhood/extended family on slips of paper. Draw them out during the day and do them. Examples: give a hug, do a hidden chore, pay a complement, say a Hail Mary for. . ., Face-time with. . .
- Today we also celebrate the beginning of the priesthood. **Write a thank you note to your parish priest(s)** thanking him for his service, example, and love for God.
- **Wash each other's feet** – while meditating on Jesus' self-giving to his friends. . . to you, and his call to serve others.
- **Bake a loaf of bread** while talking/reflecting about its place in the Passover and Jesus being our Bread of Life in the Eucharist. *Of course, this symbolic loaf at home is not consecrated like the bread at Mass that actually becomes Jesus!* Share in the one loaf together at dinner, or save it for Easter. (For unleavened bread, here's one [recipe](#).)
- **Have a special dinner** with candlelight and china, remembering the Lord's Last Supper.
- During grace before dinner, **pray or sing the Gloria**. Maybe even ring some bells while you're doing it. This joyful prayer of praise is omitted during Lenten liturgies, but is sung with gusto at the solemn Mass of the Lord's Supper.
- **Read a Gospel account** of the Holy Thursday events in the life of Jesus. (Towards the last chapters of all 4 Gospels.)
- **Set up an altar of repose**. Use houseplants, flowers, candles, linens, and a favorite image of Jesus. Take turns "watching" with Jesus in silent prayer or spiritual reading, accompanying him during his agony in the garden.



GOOD FRIDAY

The day Jesus is put on trial, scourged, crowned with thorns, sentenced to death, made to carry his cross, is crucified and dies – all for love of us.

- **Attend the Good Friday liturgy** as a family. (Special parts to watch for: altar stripped of all décor & tabernacle empty, silent entrance and prostration by ministers, minimal music, veneration of the cross, extended petitions, Communion—but not the prayers of consecration, everyone encouraged to leave in silence)
- In addition to [fasting from food](#), try fasting from: TV, music, social media and all unnecessary use of digital devices to **maintain a spirit of silent reflection** throughout this solemn day.
- **Do a good [examination of conscience](#) and an [act of contrition](#).** Consider quietly reflecting on **how you've hurt each other, as family members.** “Confess” these to one another - seeking, giving, and receiving forgiveness.
- Take turns **venerating a cross**, even lying prostrate before one (like the priests/deacons do at the start of the Good Friday liturgy.) Sing “Were You There” or listen to an appropriate song.
- **Do the Stations of the Cross.** Kids love [coloring them](#) and posting them throughout the house. Process with candles or a crucifix.
- The Good Friday liturgy includes extensive **prayers of petition.** Write your own and pray them together.
- **Pray the [Chaplet of Divine Mercy](#)** at 3:00 p.m., the hour Jesus died.
- **Read the account of the Passion** in the Gospel of John, chapters 18-19.
- **Construct and place a cross in your front yard** to witness to your neighbors and passers-by.
- **Have a simple, meatless soup supper, sharing:** a favorite Station of the Cross, “dying’s and rising’s” in your own life, or insights from your Lent.
- **Watch part of *Jesus of Nazareth*.**



Tone for our day:

Sorrow for our own sins that caused Jesus' suffering.

Sadness, gratitude and love as we remember all that Jesus went through.

A certain silent, serious reverence and reflection.

HOLY SATURDAY

The day Jesus was in the tomb, dead. His friends locked themselves away, grieving and fearful of what might happen next.

Tone for our day:

This is a day of waiting – with the apostles and especially with the Blessed Mother, Mary.

We are grateful for what Jesus has done, still a little serious, but we know the rest of the story and are looking forward to it.

Soon and very soon Jesus will rise!



- Observe a certain silence, **reflectively waiting with Mary, while you prepare your home** for Easter – cleaning, getting decorations and eggs ready, name cards for the Easter dinner table, etc.
- **Pray the [rosary](#).**
- **Bake [Resurrection Rolls](#).**
- **Attend the Easter Vigil.** It is a beautiful, richly symbolic, truly powerful liturgy. It tends to be long and late, so if impractical for little ones in the family, maybe one parent (and the older siblings) can attend. Whatever your attendance plans, consider using one or two elements of the vigil for a family prayer experience at home. It may include:
 - In darkness, **light a candle** (or even your own Easter fire!) and share the flame from candle to candle. You may even pull your family’s Baptism candles out of storage! Pray and respond: “Christ, our Light. Thanks be to God.”
 - **Read stories of Salvation History** by candle-light. (Use one or two of the actual Vigil [readings](#), or children’s Bible books for kids)
 - **Pray or sing the Gloria.** . . . with bells! Turn on your lights!
 - **Bless yourselves with Holy Water** and process around blessing your house. **Renew your [Baptismal promises](#).** (Any time during the Easter season, fill a small bottle with the blessed Easter water at church. Use it to bless each other and your home. It’s a reminder of our Baptisms, and a rich symbol of the new life Christ offers us.)
 - **Sing along** to your favorite “Alleluia” song!
 - **Read the [Easter story](#)** (scroll to end of readings for Gospel).
 - **Make a [spiritual communion](#).**

EASTER SUNDAY

The day Jesus rose from the dead!!!! *"This is the day the Lord has made. Let us be glad and rejoice in it!"*

- **Go to Easter Sunday Mass** and invite someone to go with you. (Special parts to watch for: the return of joyful "Alleluia's," sprinkling with holy water, a prayer before the Gospel called the Sequence, and the renewal of Baptismal promises.) **Fill a small bottle with the blessed Easter water** at church, to draw from for blessings at home.
- **Dress up!** The tradition of Easter clothes reminds us that we are a new creation. We have put on Christ.
- **Have an Easter egg hunt** out in the yard if possible, recalling the women searching in the garden for Jesus who was no longer in the tomb.
- **Have a special meal** (or two!) in the formal dining room with linens, china, candles, flowers – make it truly a feast.
- **Make a playlist of Easter- Alleluia songs** to listen to throughout the day.
- **Read the Easter story** – there are various accounts at the end of all four Gospels!
- If you placed a **cross in your yard** on Friday, **find a way to witness to the Resurrection** – drape it in a white cloth, add flowers, or the words "He is Risen." Invite your neighbors to contribute. (Other ideas: paint a "stained glass" front window, or sidewalk-chalk your driveway!)
- As you encounter family members throughout the day, **say and respond**: "Christ is risen. Christ is indeed risen!"
- **Take a few minutes of silence simply seeking to encounter the risen Christ in prayer** and inviting him into your heart – with all of the power, peace, joy, and love that he brings.



Tone for our day:

*Completely joyful
and happy!*

Jesus has won.

He is with us.

*He has opened heaven
for us!*

Alleluia! Alleluia!