

THE
MYSTERY
OF OUR FAITH

HOLY WEEK
THOUGHTS BY

POPE
FRANCIS



Sunday March 28
PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

WHO AM I, WHERE IS MY HEART?

Holy week begins with the festive procession as people with olive branches welcome Jesus. But the week continues to the mystery of Jesus' death and his resurrection. We might well ask ourselves just one question: Who am I? Who am I, before my Lord? Who am I, before Jesus who enters Jerusalem amid the enthusiasm of the crowd? Am I ready to express my joy to praise him? Or do I stand back? Who am I, before the suffering Jesus? Am I like one of the leaders—priests, Pharisees, teachers of the law—who had decided to kill Jesus? Am I like Judas, who feigns love and then kisses the Master in order to betray him and hand him over? Or like the disciples who understand nothing, who fell asleep while the Lord was suffering? Or like that disciple who wanted to settle everything with a sword? Am I like those people in power who hastily summon a tribunal and seek false witnesses? Where is my heart? Which of these persons am I like? May this question remain with us throughout the entire week.



Monday March 29
MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

SHARING CHRIST'S JOURNEY

What does living Holy Week mean to us? What does following Jesus on his journey to Calvary on his way to the cross and the resurrection mean? In his earthly mission Jesus walked the roads of the Holy Land. He called and chose twelve simple people to stay with him, share his journey and continue his mission. He spoke to all without distinction: the great and the lowly, the rich young man and the poor widow, the powerful and the weak. He brought God's mercy and forgiveness. He healed, comforted, understood, gave hope and brought to all the presence of God who cares for every man and every woman, just as a good father and a good mother care for each one of their children. God does not wait for us to go to him but it is he who moves towards us, without calculation, without quantification. That is what God is like. God always takes the first step and comes towards us.



Tuesday March 30
TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

THE GOD WHO PARDONS

This is how God acts towards us sinners. The Lord continually offers us pardon and helps us accept it and be aware of our wrong-doing to free us from it. For God wants not our condemnation, but our salvation. God does not want to condemn anyone! One of you might ask me: “But Father, didn’t Pilate deserve condemnation? Did God want that?” No! God wanted to save Pilate as well as Judas, everyone! The difficulty is in allowing God to enter our hearts. Every word of the prophets is a passionate appeal full of love which seeks our conversion. This is the heart of God, the heart of a Father who loves and wants his children to live in goodness and in justice, and thus that they might live to the fullest and be happy. The heart of a Father who goes beyond our little concept of justice to open us to the limitless horizons of his mercy. His is the heart of a Father who does not treat us according to our sins nor repay us according to our faults. His is precisely the heart of the Father whom we want to encounter when we go to the confessional.



Wednesday March 31
WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

WILL YOU BETRAY ME?

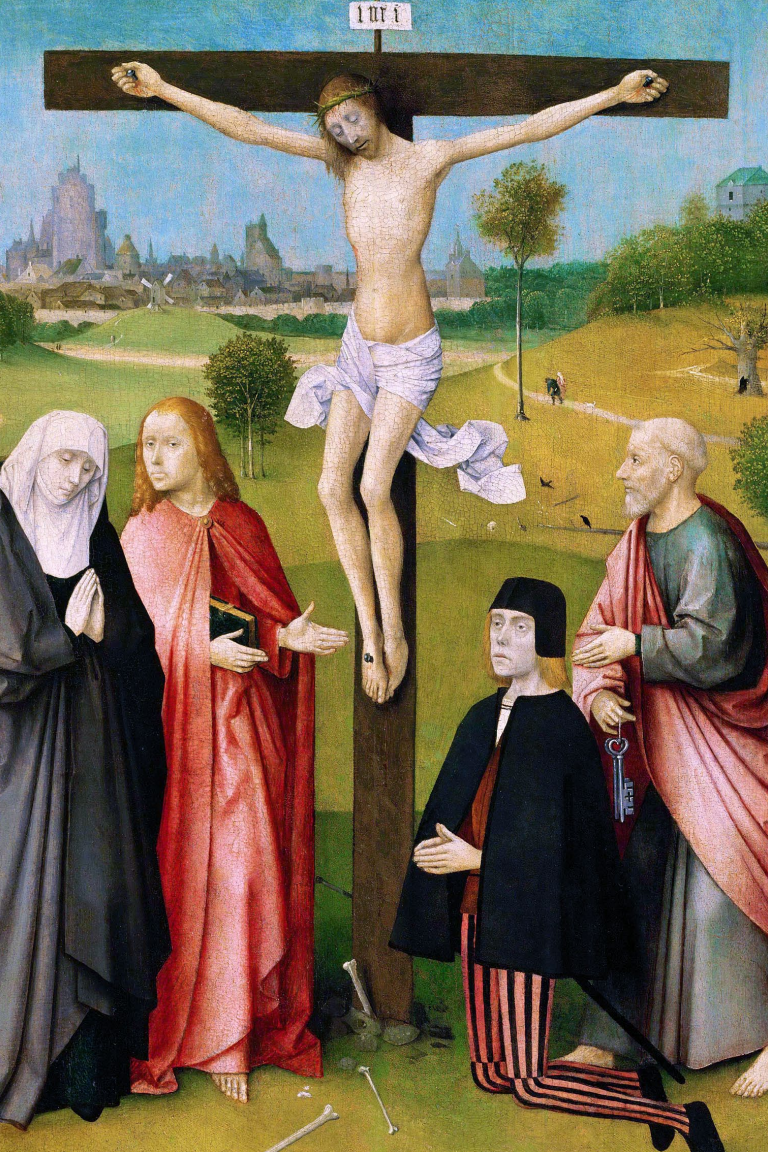
Today, midway through Holy Week, the liturgy presents us with a regrettable episode: the account of the betrayal by Judas, who goes to the leaders of the Sanhedrin to bargain for and deliver his master to them: “What will you give me if I deliver him to you?” At that moment, a price was set on Jesus. This tragic act marks the beginning of Christ’s passion, a dolorous path which he chooses with absolute freedom. He himself says it clearly: “I lay down my life. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10:17-18). And thus by this betrayal Jesus’ journey of humiliation and despoliation begins. As though he were an article for sale: this one costs 30 pieces of silver. Once he has taken the path of humiliation and self-abandonment, Jesus travels along it to the very end.



Thursday April 1
HOLY THURSDAY

SHARE THIS NOURISHMENT

Today Jesus institutes the Eucharist, anticipating in the Passover supper his coming death. To make the apostles understand the love which enlivens him, he washes their feet, offering an example of how they must act. The Eucharist is the love that becomes service. It is the presence of Christ who wishes to relieve from hunger every man and woman, especially the weakest, to enable them to boldly witness amid the difficulties of the world. In giving himself to us as food, Jesus attests that we must learn to share this nourishment with others so that it may become a true communion of life with those in need. He gives himself to us and asks us to dwell in him in order to do likewise. The more we unite ourselves to Jesus through prayer, sacred Scripture, the Eucharist, the sacraments celebrated and lived in the Church and in community, the more there will grow in us the joy of cooperating with God in the service of the kingdom of mercy and truth, of justice and peace.



Friday April 2
GOOD FRIDAY

REACHING OUT TO HELP OTHERS

The cross of Christ invites us to allow ourselves to be smitten by his love, teaching us always to look upon others with mercy and tenderness, especially those who suffer, who need help, who need a word or a concrete action. The cross invites us to step outside ourselves to meet them and extend a hand to them. How many times have we seen people like them on the Way of the Cross: Pilate, Simon of Cyrene, Mary, the women. Which of them do you want to be? Do you want to be like Pilate, who did not have the courage to go against the tide to save Jesus' life, and instead washed his hands? Are you one of those who wash their hands, who feign ignorance and look the other way? Or are you like Simon of Cyrene, who helped Jesus to carry that heavy wood, or like Mary and the other women, who were not afraid to accompany Jesus all the way to the end, with love and tenderness? Jesus is looking at you now and asking you: do you want to help me carry the cross? How will you respond to him?



Saturday April 3
HOLY SATURDAY

GOD'S SILENCE

Holy Saturday is the day of God's silence. It must be a day of silence, and we must do everything possible so that for us it may truly be a day of silence, as it was in that time—the day of the silence of God. Laid in the sepulcher, Jesus shares with all of humanity in the tragedy of death. It is a silence which speaks and expresses love as solidarity with those who have always been neglected, whom the Son of God reaches, filling the emptiness that only the infinite mercy of God the Father can fill. God is silent, but out of love. On this day, love—that silent love—becomes the expectation of life in the resurrection. Let us also think about the silence of Mary, “the believer,” who awaited the resurrection in silence. She will be, for us, the icon of Holy Saturday. Think hard about how she lived that Holy Saturday—in expectation. It is love that has no doubt, but which hopes in the word of the Lord, that it may be made manifest and resplendent on the day of Easter.

Sunday April 4
EASTER SUNDAY

JESUS IS RISEN!

Today our hearts are filled with Easter joy. After Lent, the time of penance and conversion, after the striking celebrations of the Holy Triduum, today we stand before Jesus' empty tomb and meditate with wonder and gratitude on the resurrection of the Lord. What does it mean that Jesus is risen? It means that God's love is stronger than evil and death and can transform our lives. God's love can do this! Jesus did not return to his former earthly life, but entered into the glorious life of God with our humanity, opening us to a future of hope. He no longer belongs to the past, but lives in the present and is projected towards the future. God's newness appears as victory over sin, evil and death, over everything that crushes life and makes it less human. Let the risen Jesus enter your life. Welcome him as a friend, with trust: he is life! If till now you have kept him at a distance, step forward. He will receive you with open arms. If you have been indifferent, take a risk. You won't be disappointed. If following him seems hard, don't be afraid, trust him, be confident that he is close to you. He is with you. Happy Easter!