

# **Celebrating Holy Week at Home**

## **Finding Light in the Darkness of an Epidemic**

Restricted from public gatherings, Catholics around the world will be unable to attend Holy Week Masses and services. This provides the challenge of finding ways to observe these Holy Days at home. Confined to our homes with fewer distractions, it also provides an opportunity to approach the celebrations of Holy Week more fully and intentionally than usual. Though it will not be the same as joining our friends and neighbors in our parish church to celebrate the central feasts of our faith, we can still find meaningful ways to commemorate and celebrate the death and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

### **Celebrate the Triduum with Pope Francis this year – live-streamed to your home**

The Prefecture of the Pontifical Household announced “that, because of the current global public health emergency, all the Liturgical Celebrations of Holy Week will take place without the physical presence of the faithful.” The statement also confirmed that all the celebrations will be broadcast live on radio and television and live-streamed by Vatican News. Below is the schedule for the Triduum:

#### **Holy Thursday- April 9**

**9.30 a.m.** Pope Francis will preside over the [Chrism Mass](#) at St. Peter’s Basilica. He will bless the holy oils, or “chrisms” used to administer the Sacraments throughout the year.

**5:00 p.m.** Pope Francis is scheduled to celebrate The Mass of the Lord's Supper at Velletri Correctional Facility and wash the feet of 12 prisoners who reside there.

#### **Good Friday - April 10**

**5:00 p.m.** In St Peter's Basilica, Pope Francis will preside over the Liturgy of the Word, the Adoration of the Cross, and the Communion Rite at [The Passion of the Lord](#), commemorating the Lord’s crucifixion and death on Mount Calvary.

**9.15 p.m.** Pope Francis will participate in the [“Via Crucis,” or “Way of the Cross”](#), at the Colosseum, at the end of which he will give a reflection and impart his Apostolic Blessing.

#### **Holy Saturday – April 11**

**8.30 p.m.** Pope Francis will bless the new fire and lead the procession with the Easter candle and the singing of the “Exsultet” (or “Easter Proclamation”), before presiding over the Liturgy of the Word, the Baptismal Liturgy and the Celebration of the Eucharist at the [Easter Vigil](#).

#### **Easter Sunday – April 12**

**10:00 a.m.** Pope Francis will celebrate [Easter Mass](#) in St Peter’s Square.

## **Other Televised Masses**

[CatholicTV](#) broadcasts Masses live from the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at Notre Dame's campus.

Many dioceses live-stream Masses and services to the faithful. Check your diocesan website for information.

## **How to get the most out of Mass online**

In the weeks prior to Easter, preview the televised Masses offered to determine which may be most appropriate for your household.

Set up a space in your home for prayer/worship. Consider covering a table with a tablecloth or another nice cloth of the seasonal liturgical color. Place a Bible, a candle and a cross or crucifix on the table.

Straighten the space and arrange enough furniture for all.

Have everyone come prepared to attend to the Mass.

Turn off and remove all devices that can distract from the space.

Remind everyone that we do not kneel and perform the ritual gestures of Mass while we are watching it, since this does not take the place of attending Mass. But everyone should attend to it prayerfully and make a spiritual communion.

Before the Mass begins, light the candle.

## **Catholics Encouraged to practice “Spiritual Communion” during COVID-19 Epidemic**

After the Angelus prayer on March 3, Pope Francis invited the faithful “to rediscover and deepen the value of the communion that unites all the members of the Church. United to Christ we are never alone, but we form one single Body, of which He is the Head.”

Pope Francis encouraged those unable to attend Church to pray for spiritual communion, “a practice that is highly recommended when it is not possible to receive the Sacrament.”

Archbishops and bishops in the U.S. join the pope in inviting the faithful to this practice.

In his encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, Pope John Paul II explained how the essential role of the Eucharist in uniting us to Christ led to the practice of “spiritual communion”:

In the Eucharist, "unlike any other sacrament, the mystery [of communion] is so perfect that it brings us to the heights of every good thing: Here is the ultimate goal of every human desire, because here we attain God and God joins himself to us in the most perfect union."

Precisely for this reason it is good to cultivate in our hearts a constant desire for the sacrament of the Eucharist. This was the origin of the practice of "spiritual communion," which has happily been established in the Church for centuries and recommended by saints who were masters of the spiritual life. St. Teresa of Jesus wrote: "When you do not receive communion and you do not attend Mass, you can make a spiritual communion, which is a most beneficial practice; by it the love of God will be greatly impressed on you" [The Way of Perfection, Ch. 35.].1.

### **What is spiritual communion?**

Spiritual Communion is the practice of desiring union with Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist. It is used primarily by individuals who cannot receive Holy Communion, such as the ill, the divorced and remarried, and those who have not yet been received into full communion with the Church. St. Thomas Aquinas described it as “an ardent desire to receive Jesus in the most holy sacrament and lovingly embrace him” at a time or in circumstances when we cannot receive him in sacramental Communion.

### **Act of Spiritual Communion**

**My Jesus,**

**I believe that you are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.**

**I love you above all things, and I desire to receive you into my soul.**

**Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally,**

**come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace you  
as if you were already there and unite myself wholly to you.**

**Never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.**

In addition to St. Teresa of Jesus, other saints have encouraged spiritual communion:

*“Communion is to the soul like blowing a fire that is beginning to go out, but that has still plenty of hot embers; we blow, and the fire burns again.”*

*“After the reception of the Sacraments, when we feel ourselves slacken in the love of God, let us have recourse at once to spiritual communion. When we cannot go to the church, let us turn towards the tabernacle; no wall cannot separate us from the good God.”* St. John Vianney

*Spiritual Communion is “an ardent desire to receive Jesus in the Holy Sacrament and a loving embrace as though we had already received Him.”* St. Thomas Aquinas

*“What a source of grace there is in spiritual Communion! Practice it frequently and you'll have more presence of God and closer union with him in your life.”* St. Josemaría Escrivá.

### **Pray the Liturgy of the Hours**

Join priests and religious around the world each day of Holy Week in praying the Liturgy of the Hours. <http://www.ibreviary.com/>

### **Pray the Stations of the Cross or practice other Devotions**

The Stations of the Cross by Saint Francis of Assisi

Stations of the Cross HD - TV Version

The Stations of the Cross with Bishop Barron

THE CHAPLET OF DIVINE MERCY (ROSARY)

### **Listen to the Readings of the Day**

[Daily Readings from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops](#)