

Holy Week

The distinct practice of celebrating Holy Week emerged in the 4th century and became increasingly elaborate in the Middle Ages. While most traditional rites were abandoned during the Reformation, the 20th century saw interest in reviving these classical practices. Holy Week is important liturgically and devotionally for many Episcopalians, with liturgies starting on page 270 in *The Book of Common Prayer* for Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and the Great Vigil of Easter, as well as provisions for services such as the Way (or Stations) of the Cross, Tenebrae, and the Agapé meal in *The Book of Occasional Services*. The liturgical color for Holy Week is oxblood red, recalling Christ's sacrifice for us.

Maundy Thursday

- ✠ Recalls the last supper, foot washing, and institution of the eucharist
- ✠ Many congregations do an Agapé meal
- ✠ An all-night vigil, starting with stripping the altar, is often held on Maundy Thursday
- ✠ *Did you know?* *Maundy* comes from the Latin *mandatum*, meaning *commandment*, a reference to the new commandment Christ gave his disciples



Palm Sunday

- ✠ Recalls Christ's entry into Jerusalem
- ✠ Begins with triumphal procession and ends with solemn eucharist
- ✠ The service begins in a place other than the church, where the people gather and then make their procession into the church
- ✠ *Did you know?* Before refrigerated transport, people in northern climates would use local plants such as evergreens, palmettos, or pussy willows in place of palms



Holy Saturday

- ✠ Recalls when Christ was dead in the tomb
- ✠ The altar is bare or covered by a funeral pall
- ✠ A service for this day has been included in *The Book of Common Prayer* since the first edition in 1549
- ✠ *Did you know?* *Holy Saturday* can also be called *Holy Sabbath* or *Great Sabbath*



The Other Days

- ✠ No festivals may be observed on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Holy Week
- ✠ A Tenebrae (Latin for "darkness") service, involving the extinguishing of candles, can be done on Holy Wednesday
- ✠ *Did you know?* *Wednesday of Holy Week* can be called "*Spy Wednesday*" in reference to Judas's clandestine betrayal



Good Friday

- ✠ Recalls Christ's crucifixion
- ✠ Consists of the Liturgy of the Word, Veneration of the Cross, and an (optional) communion from the reserve sacrament
- ✠ Following ancient tradition, celebration of the eucharist is forbidden on Good Friday
- ✠ *Did you know?* The older custom is for black vestments on Good Friday—a tradition maintained in some places by the acolytes and choir wearing only the cassock with no surplice

