

A week of turmoil and triumph

Each year, we celebrate the most momentous week in all of history, a week filled with turmoil and triumph: Holy Week.

We start with Palm Sunday, also known as Passion Sunday. Jesus makes a triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The people love him! They wave palm branches as a man riding on a donkey passes by and proclaim him a king. They rejoice in his presence. But they do not realize that in just a few days, they will be clamoring for his death.

Dioceses around the world celebrate the Chrism Mass, in which the bishop blesses the oils that will be used for the sacraments throughout the year. In the ancient rite, he will call down the Holy Spirit on the oils – breathing on the oils, calling to mind the breath of the Spirit. The oils – chrism, which is used in confirmation and holy orders; the oil of the catechumens, used in baptism; and the oil of the sick – begin as ordinary oil, with balsam and other fragrances added. The church celebrates this rite in which something as mundane as olive oil becomes something sacred, used as a sign and symbol in rites of the church.

At the Chrism Mass, which will be celebrated in the Archdiocese of Baltimore April 10, 7:30 p.m., at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen, all priests of the archdiocese also renew their vows of service to the church. As with the sanctification of oil from something ordinary into something holy, the sacrament of Holy Orders takes ordinary men and transforms them into priests and deacons with faculties to serve the people of God. This is especially significant for our priests, who call down the fire of the Spirit on our communities and who, at the consecration of the Mass, change ordinary bread and wine into the Real Presence of Christ's Body and Blood.

The liturgies of the triduum – Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday – call to mind other significant events in Jesus' final days.

We recall when Jesus gathered the 12 Apostles around a table in the Upper Room for a meal that held great promise and great sadness. The Lord sets the example for service to others by taking a towel and a basin of water and washing the feet of his disciples, a ritual we continue today in our churches. The rite symbolizes how each of us must be willing to take the lowest duty to serve others if we are to show mercy as Jesus did.

At the same meal, Jesus established the Eucharist when he told his followers, "Take and eat, this is my Body," and urged them to drink from the cup of "the blood of the covenant." These were not idle words; neither were they to be taken as purely symbolic. Jesus gave us his true flesh to eat and his true blood to drink so that we could have life in him abundantly.

And yet, that same night, Jesus foretold Judas' betrayal and Peter's denial of him. He

spent time in the garden of Gethsemane in agony, sweating blood over his coming Passion.

We all know the events of Good Friday, revisited through the Stations of the Cross and the crucifix that adorn all our churches. The nails that pinned Jesus to the cross represent our sins.

After such tumultuous times, it is difficult not to be sad or disheartened, as Jesus' disciples must have been. However, we know the rest of the story. The stone is rolled away and the angel tells the women at the tomb, "He is not here, for he has been raised, just as he said."

For us now, 2,000 years later, the message is still the same. Amidst all the turmoil, the ultimate triumph: Jesus is risen – yesterday, today and forever.

[Read more commentary here.](#)