

Seton Magazine

15 Questions for Holy Week

1. What is the derivation of the word *Lent*?
2. Why is Lent forty days long?
3. On what day does Lent end?
4. Why is Wednesday of Holy Week also known as “Spy Wednesday”?
5. What “new commandment” did Christ give his followers on Holy Thursday?
6. Why is there no Mass on Friday of Holy Week?
7. Golgotha is the Hebrew name for the hill where Jesus was crucified. This place was known by another name. What is it?
8. Why was it necessary to remove the bodies of Christ and two criminals from their crosses before sunset on Friday?
9. How was Christ’s body prepared for burial?
10. What spice in that preparation harkens back to his birth?
11. What is the meaning of the words from the Apostle’s Creed “He descended into hell”?
12. Why does the Church declare that on the third day Christ rose from the dead, when by modern reckoning that time would be two days?
13. Why is Holy Saturday traditionally a day of quiet and meditation?
14. Why in many parishes are fires lit outside the church as a prelude to the Holy Saturday Vigil Mass?
15. Why are converts typically received into the Catholic Church during this Vigil Mass?

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15 Questions for Holy Week – with Answers

1. What is the derivation of the word *Lent*?

Lent comes to us from an Old German word, len (c) ten, meaning “spring season” or “lengthening days.”

2. Why is Lent forty days long?

Though the number 40 has significance in several Biblical accounts, during Lent Christians follow Christ’s withdrawal into the desert for 40 days.

3. On what day does Lent end?

Lent ends at the evening Mass on Holy Thursday, which brings us to the Triduum, a “liturgical season in its own right and the shortest of the liturgical year.” (Catholic Answers)

4. Why is Wednesday of Holy Week also known as “Spy Wednesday”?

This is the day on which Judas betrayed Jesus to the Sanhedrin.

5. What “new commandment” did Christ give his followers on Holy Thursday?

In John 13:34, Jesus says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

6. Why is there no Mass on Friday of Holy Week?

In accordance with ancient tradition, Mass is not celebrated on Good Friday. We focus instead that the Body and Blood of Christ, which is at the center of Mass, was sacrificed on Good Friday.

7. Golgotha is the Hebrew name for the hill where Jesus was crucified. This place was known by another name. What is it?

Calvary

8. Why was it necessary to remove the bodies of Christ and two criminals from their crosses before sunset on Friday?

Sunset on Friday began the Jewish Sabbath. Joseph of Arimathea knew that the body had to be buried before sunset. Moreover, Hebraic law demanded that the body of a condemned man be buried on the same day he died. (Deut. 21: 22-23)

9. How was Christ’s body prepared for burial?

Nicodemus helped Joseph of Arimathea prepare the body using a burial cloth, myrrh, and aloes.

10. What spice in that preparation harkens back to his birth?

Myrrh was an embalming oil and a symbol of death.

11. What is the meaning of the words from the Apostle's Creed "He descended into hell"?

Hell here refers to the "abode of the dead." In what is known as the "Harrowing of Hell," Jesus descended to the realm of the dead to bring salvation to the righteous who died after the beginning of the world.

12. Why does the Church declare that on the third day Christ rose from the dead, when by modern reckoning that time would be two days?

According to Hebrew tradition, any part of a day counts as a full day. Therefore, Christ arose on the third day.

13. Why is Holy Saturday traditionally a day of quiet and meditation?

As an ancient homily used in the Church's liturgy puts it, "the whole earth keeps silence because the King is asleep." We honor Christ with this silence and share in the sadness of His crucifixion.

14. Why in many parishes are fires lit outside the church as a prelude to the Holy Saturday Vigil Mass?

These fires symbolize the *lumen Christi*, the light of Christ, the movement from darkness to light.

15. Why are converts typically received into the Catholic Church during this Vigil Mass?

Christ promised us a new life in heaven and on earth. This new life begins with His resurrection. So, too, does the new life of the convert.