

A Time Of Change

# HOLY WEEK

Matthew 26:14-27:66



**ECCE HOMO**



**BEHOLD THE MAN**

# WHAT IS HOLY WEEK?

- Holy Week, in the Christian church, the week between Palm Sunday and Easter, observed with special solemnity as a time of **devotion to the Passion of Jesus Christ**
- **Holy Week is the most important week in the Church year!**
- It is a time when we celebrate in a special way the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.
- We remember His actions, reflect on His messages, and **recommit to living as His disciples in the world today.**

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The very first Holy Week was a period of time when *changes* took place in many different people: some of those changes were good, and some of them were not-so-good.

One of the most disturbing changes in the not-so-good category took place in the hearts and souls of certain residents of Jerusalem. Think about it: Some of the same men and women who were hailing Jesus as the Messiah on Palm Sunday were screaming for his blood on Good Friday!

The changing tide of public opinion: one day you're the greatest person on earth, the next day you're "public enemy number one!" That's why we should always try to please God, and not human beings.

**Judas Iscariot** is about to change. That was another terrible tragedy of Holy Week! What's wrong with this man? How could he live for three years in Christ's inner circle and then betray the best friend he ever had. This man went from being a close, intimate friend of the divine Son of God, to the worst traitor in the history of the world! Selling Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, leading to Jesus arrest (cf. Matthew 26:15).

**Apostle Peter** also changed for the worse during these few short days. Peter's denial of Jesus is one of the most gut-wrenching in the Gospel. We watch with horror as Peter, one of Jesus' closest friend and most committed follower, denied Him, not just once but three times.

As we remember Peter's confusion and fear, we can understand why he felt tempted to disavow his Master. Peter was afraid that he would be arrested if he admitted that he knew Jesus. Yet, still, it is heart-breaking to hear Peter say, "*I do not know what you are talking about ... I do not know the man ... I do not know the man.*"  
(Matthew 26:69-75)



All the Apostles changed for the worst. They all abandoned Jesus as soon as our Lord was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. But, thanks be to God, many other people changed for the better during the first Holy Week!

The “**Good Thief,**” for example (Luke’s Passion Narrative) changed, radically as he hung next to Jesus on Good Friday. He made a 180 degrees turnaround in his heart, and so he joined our Lord that day in Paradise!  
*“Indeed, I promise you, today you will be with me in paradise.”* (Luke 23:43)

All of which shows that deathbed conversions can and do happen! Yes - they might be rare, but they certainly are possible.

**The Roman Centurion** who stood at the foot of the cross changed for the better: he became a believer - a man of faith - after he saw the way that Jesus died. *“In truth this man was the son of God”* (Mark 15:39)

**Joseph of Arimathea** changed in a positive way by becoming an *openly-committed* disciple of Jesus when he came forth to claim our Lord’s body for burial, having been a secret disciple of Jesus before that.

**Our Blessed Mother Mary** underwent a kind of change from Palm Sunday to Good Friday. She went from being “the rejoicing Mother” of the Messiah as she watched her Son enter Jerusalem in triumph, to “the sorrowful Mother” of the Saviour as she stood at the foot of his cross - in the process, becoming a role model for us as we struggle to deal with our daily crosses.



# Where are you going?

## QUO VADIS?



- How do we continue our journey as Baptised Catholics in this 'new norm'?
- How do we continue our prayer life?
- Where do we find God?
- Why do we need both personal and community prayer?

### Ways to enter more deeply into Holy Week

- Pray as a family - Holy Rosary and Divine Mercy daily (only 30 mins) and attend online mass daily as a family
- **Personal prayer time**, spend 15-20 mins reflecting on Scripture: **The Suffering Servant** (Isaiah 53:1-12)

For the whole of Holy Week till Good Friday just read this passage over and over again and you will surely discover who Jesus really is and how much He loves us.

*Ecce Homo - "Behold The Man"*

## With the COVID-19 pandemic, situations have changed. Have we changed?

Churches around the world have suspended masses, services, activities and in Singapore during the holiest week - all churches were asked to be shut down. A 'circuit breaker' has been activated in Singapore. Work places and schools shut down from 7 April till 4 May and everyone has to stay at home for 4 weeks and not go out, unless it's for essential purposes.

There may be shut downs and lockdowns throughout the globe. But nothing and no-one can shut down the door of our hearts to God, except we ourselves. And it is in this 'desert' time that our hearts are more able to be opened without too much distractions. *Carpe Diem!* Seize the Day! Seize the Moment! Let God seize our hearts and lead us into the desert. There He will speak to our hearts, if we but LISTEN.

Many people are using Zoom and other social media to join community gatherings and prayers online. These are all well and good, yet there is a danger that even these tools can lead us to more distractions. We are so used to noise, activities and social connections, and left alone we enter into a 'no-zone, ground zero' space where some feel helpless and loneliness creeps in. Loneliness can be changed into SOLITUDE.

We need both '*Martha and Mary*', the active and the contemplative (which is lacking in our fast paced activities), even the well intentioned online community prayers and meetings. Let us ENTER more deeply into SILENCE. In a twist and turn, the circuit breaker started 7 April (2nd day of Holy Week). If we look at it with the eyes of faith we can receive this as a gift to enter into deeper silence and solitude. I dare challenge each of us to STOP ALL online activities and meetings this Holy Week, except for Holy Mass online. And be "Alone with THE ALONE - GOD".

Here are some ways we can spend this Holy Week and arise triumphantly on Easter Sunday, knowing and believing that Our God Reigns, NOT the Covid-19 which will be banished in God's Time.