

Be a Pilgrim!

Mary Sellars Malloy

Take a minute or two to name the three most important days or events in your life thus far. Perhaps those days include your college graduation, your wedding day, the birth of a child, or completing something on your bucket list. What makes those days, those events the most special ones?

Now name what the Church considers to be the three most important days in her liturgical year. Did you name Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil, and Easter Sunday? Yes, I just named four calendar days, but the three most important days are celebrated from sundown to sundown. Together, they make up the shortest season of the liturgical year—the *Triduum*, or “the three days.” Day one of the Triduum begins with the Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday evening and ends on Good Friday evening. Day two begins on Good Friday evening and ends with the celebration of the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday night. Day three begins on Holy Saturday night and continues through evening prayer on Easter Sunday evening. These three days are so closely connected that the Church considers them to be one event.

Thanks to the writings of a fourth century pilgrim named Egeria, we gain a sense of how the early Church celebrated these important days as an annual retreat or pilgrimage. The pilgrims walked from one location to the next—from the Upper Room to the place of Christ’s Crucifixion to the tomb where Jesus lay. At each place the faithful listened to the proclamation of the story of the event that took place on that site. The stories described the heart of the Paschal Mystery—the life, suffering, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We may not have the luxury of joining pilgrims in the Holy Land, but the Church invites all Catholics to make the Triduum pilgrimage each year. This year the pilgrimage begins on April 18 and concludes on April 21. It leads us to our local parish communities, where we hear our collective story of faith and experience the richness of that story through the proclamation

APRIL | TRIDUUM

2 |

of God's Word, the celebration of the Sacraments, lavish use of symbols, and the best of our songs. We witness the washing of feet, we take part in the procession to adore the cross, we welcome the newly baptized, we renew our baptismal promises, and we sing again, "Glory to God!" and "Alleluia!"

If it has been awhile since you have made the Triduum pilgrimage, plan to do so this year. Prepare for each event by taking time to do the Triduum reflections offered as this month's Prayer of the Month. Pray for the millions of Catholics throughout the world who are joining you on the pilgrimage, celebrating the three greatest days in the Church's liturgical year. Come, be a pilgrim!

Mary Sellars Malloy has over forty years' experience as a Catholic educator and lay minister. She is a frequent workshop presenter on the topics of prayer, liturgy, spirituality, the Sacraments, and the RCIA. In addition, Mary leads retreats and parish missions throughout the country. Her goal is to encourage Catholics of all ages to appreciate and to live their Catholic faith.



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