

# RELIGIOUS & CULTURAL OBSERVATIONS

Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter



**In support of our patients, their families, and our employees, faculty members and students, this information is offered as a resource about the Christian observance of Holy Week, including Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter.**

## History and Meaning

For Western and Eastern Christian traditions, Holy Week includes Palm Sunday, the day that Jesus came into Jerusalem as a recognized leader and celebrated religious figure; Good Friday, the day that Jesus was tried and crucified or executed on a wooden cross; and Easter, the day that Jesus Christ arose from the dead. Jesus is believed to be the savior, the son of God.

On Holy Thursday, Christians recall the day that Jesus Christ was tried and condemned to death. On Good Friday, Jesus was crucified and died on the cross. This is why the cross is such an important symbol for Christians. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life" (John 3:16). Good Friday is a day set aside for reflection and thanksgiving for the unconditional faithfulness and love of God. Veneration of the cross is a customary service in most churches.

Easter celebrates the most significant event in Christian history: the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It commences a 50-day celebration until Pentecost. Per Christian belief, Jesus' life, death and resurrection become a path to his ascension, which is a process of death into new life. For Christians, the resurrection is a factual reality, and this reality becomes an ongoing transformation in one's spiritual life. Each person experiences death in relationships, events, in the seasons, etc. Within these experiences, there is renewal and new life.

This week symbolizes the spiritual journey, which includes times of celebration, loss and dying, and redemption or hope. It is a symbol of God's love, which overcomes death. This

process is referred to as the Paschal Mystery. The dates of Holy Week differ between the Eastern and Western Christian traditions.

## Relevant Observances

- There are church services and sacred readings during this week. On Holy Thursday, there is a somber remembrance of Jesus' condemnation. On Easter, there is often a sunrise service honoring the resurrection of Jesus.
- For Roman Catholic patients, no Mass is celebrated on Good Friday or Holy Saturday.
- There may be special family gatherings and meals that take place.

## Tips for Supporting Patient Care

- Patients may desire to hear the scripture readings for Easter.
- Patients may want special prayer.
- This may be a special time with family, which is interrupted by hospitalization and illness.

## Tips for Supporting Staff Members, Faculty Members and Students:

- Support employees' right for paid time off to attend a Mass or religious service in their congregation.

## For More Information

Please contact the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at [diversity@jhmi.edu](mailto:diversity@jhmi.edu) or Paula Teague, senior director of the Department of Spiritual Care and Chaplaincy, at [pteague1@jhmi.edu](mailto:pteague1@jhmi.edu).