

Adult Catechism February 13 , 2017

Christ Our Pascha: The Passion of Christ, His Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension into Heaven and Coming of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost)

Part 1: The Passion of Jesus Christ: What important events marked the end of Our Lord's public life? --The following events marked the end of Our Lord's public life: His solemn entry into Jerusalem, the Last Supper He ate with His Apostles, and finally, His passion and death.

Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem in triumph, riding on an ass, with children waving palms and singing. The Church commemorates the entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. On that day palms or pussy willows are blessed, and there is a procession, in memory of the palms that the joyous people waved at the entrance into Jerusalem of Our Lord. Palm or Willow Sunday is the Sunday before Easter. The week following it is called Holy Week. On the Thursday evening after His entry into Jerusalem, Jesus ate the Paschal Supper with His Apostles. We call it the Last Supper, for it was the last meal He ate before His death. The Jews celebrated the feast of the Pasch in memory of their deliverance from Egypt. They had been saved by the blood of the paschal lamb. After the Supper, Our Lord washed the feet of the Apostles. He did this to teach us humility. In commemoration, the celebrant of Holy Thursday Mass today washes the feet of twelve men, after the Gospel. After the washing of feet, Our Lord instituted the Blessed Eucharist, said the first Mass, and gave His Apostles their first Holy Communion.

What is meant by the Redemption? --By the Redemption is meant that Jesus Christ, as Redeemer of the whole human race, offered His sufferings and death to God as a fitting sacrifice in satisfaction for the sins of men, and regained for them the right to be children of God and heirs of heaven. A redeemer is one who pays in order to get back something lost. He gives satisfaction, compensation for an offense or injury done another.

No creature could, of himself, make satisfaction for sin. Sin offends an infinite God, and therefore would need infinite satisfaction. Therefore Someone Infinite, Jesus Christ, had to offer that satisfaction. Jesus Christ suffered and died as man; as God He could neither suffer nor die. He suffered excruciatingly in order to make full reparation for sin, and to impress on us the great evil of sin. Even only one sin is so abominable to God that not all the deluges and fires can wipe off the stain. Only the blood of God Himself can do so. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Is. 53:6).

Christ died for all men, without exception. He is the Redeemer of all men. Not all men are saved because not all accept the graces which Christ merited for us by His death. Many do not believe in Him. Of those who believe, many lead sinful lives. "Christ also loved us and delivered himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God" (Eph. 5:2). We can never realize fully that God died

for us. We can never repay Him in this life or the next. The only way we can show our appreciation is to live according to His will.

What were the chief sufferings of Christ? --The chief sufferings of Christ were His bitter agony of soul, His bloody sweat, His cruel scourging, His crowning with thorns, His crucifixion, and His death on the cross.

Christ had often foretold His Passion. "For he was teaching his disciples, and saying to them 'The Son of Man is to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and having been killed, he will rise again on the third day'" (Mark 9:30). Again: "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the Scribes; and they will condemn him to death, and will deliver him to the Gentiles; and they will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and put him to death; and on the third day he will rise again" (Mark 10:33-34). From the Last Supper, Christ went with His Apostles to the Garden of Olives to pray. There He was overwhelmed with sorrow and agony, so that He sweated blood.

Our Lord looked forward to His agony, saying to His Apostles, "That the world may know that I love the Father, and that I do as the Father has commanded me. Arise, let us go from here" (John 14:31). In the Garden, Jesus felt so sad at the sins of men and at what would befall Him that He said, "My soul is sad even unto death" (Matt. 26:38). To His Father, He cried out in pain, "Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; yet not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). In agony, "his sweat became as drops of blood, running down upon the ground" (Luke 22:44). Jesus Christ was betrayed by Judas, seized by soldiers, led before the high priest, and condemned to death. The Sanhedrin, the council of the Jews, headed by Caiphas the high priest, condemned Jesus to death for the crime of blasphemy, because He claimed to be Christ the Son of God.

"Then the high priest, standing up, said to him, 'Dost thou make no answer to the things that these men prefer against thee?' But Jesus kept silence. And the high priest said to him, 'I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou art the Christ, the Son of God.' Jesus said to him, 'Thou hast said it.' ... Then the high priest tore his garment, saying, 'He has blasphemed; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?' And they answered and said, 'He is liable to death'" (Matt. 26:62-66). Jesus Christ was led to Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judea, to have His sentence confirmed. At the time the Jews were forbidden by their Roman masters from putting anyone to death without the confirmation of the Governor. Pilate questioned Christ time and again, but had to say to His accusers: "I find no guilt in Him."

The Jewish Priests and Pharisees hated and persecuted Jesus because they expected the Messiah to be an earthly king. They were so wicked that in spite of the proofs of Christ's divinity, they would not believe a poor man could be the Messiah. They hated Jesus; He had rebuked them for their sins.

But Pilate wished to please the Jews, and had Jesus scourged, Jesus was bound to a pillar, His clothes torn off; strong men with whips, cords, and straps with iron spikes scourged Him, and the whole body of Our Lord was one great wound. "And the soldiers, plaiting a crown of thorns, put it upon his head, and arrayed him in a purple cloak. And they kept coming to him and saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and striking him. Pilate therefore again went outside and said to them, 'Behold, I bring him out to you, that you may know that I find no guilt in him.' Jesus therefore came forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple cloak. And he said to them, 'Behold the man!'"

At last, fearing that if he did not permit Jesus to be put to death the Jews would accuse him before Caesar, Pilate gave in to the insistence of the Jews and delivered Him to them to be crucified. Christ was made to carry His cross through the streets of Jerusalem to Mount Calvary. He was nailed to the cross about noon, dying three hours afterwards, crucified between two thieves. Taken from <http://www.catholicbook.com/AgredaCD/MyCatholicFaith/mcfc034.htm>

Part 2: The Death of Jesus Christ When did Christ die? --Christ died on Good Friday. During the three hours that Christ suffered on the cross, He spoke seven times. We call these the seven words: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." "Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise." "Woman, behold thy son.... Behold thy mother." "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" "I thirst." "It is consummated." "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Where did Christ die? --Christ died on Golgotha, a place outside the city of Jerusalem. Christ was crucified on a hill called Calvary, outside the city of Jerusalem. St. Augustine says that on the cross Our Lord bent His head to kiss us, extended His arms to embrace us, and opened His heart to love us. How thankful we should be to Christ for His love! "He humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even to death on a cross" (Phil. 2:8).

What took place at the death of Christ? --At the death of Christ the sun was darkened, the earth quaked, the veil of the Temple was rent, the rocks split, and many of the dead arose and appeared in Jerusalem. The tearing of the veil of the Temple at the death of Christ marked the end of the Jewish religion as the true religion. This Jewish religion had been a figure of the True Church, and when the Church was established, was no longer needed: types and figures had to give way to reality. The veil of the Temple concealed the Holy of Holies, the most sacred part of the Temple.

We must not, however, make the mistake of thinking that Christianity ended the moral laws-laws regarding good and evil that were taught by the Jewish religion. Christ came not to destroy, but to perfect, the Old Law. The authority of the Temple and its officers was now placed in the Church established by Christ, in the hands of His Apostles. The ceremonial laws of the Jews relating to worship were abolished.

The Church commemorates the passion and death of Christ on Good Friday. After His death, Our Lord's body was taken down from the cross and laid in the grave which belonged to Joseph of Arimathea. Then His disciples rolled up a great stone to close the tomb.

The chief priests and the Pharisees went in a body to Pilate, saying, 'Sir, we have remembered how that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' Give orders, therefore, that the sepulchre be guarded until the third day, or else his disciples may come and steal him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead'; and the last imposture will be worse than the first." Pilate said to them, 'You have a guard; go, guard it as well as you know how.' So they went and made the sepulchre secure, scaling the stone, and setting the guard (Matt. 27:63-66)

What do we learn from the sufferings and death of Christ? --From the sufferings and death of Christ we learn God's love for man and the evil of sin, for which God, who is all-just, demands such great satisfaction. It was not necessary for Jesus to suffer so intensely in order to redeem all men. As His merits are infinite, He could have wiped away the sins of a thousand worlds by shedding one drop of His blood. But He chose to suffer agonies because He loves us.

"Greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep ... I am the good shepherd; and I know mine and mine know me. ... and I lay down my life for my sheep" (John 10:11-15). From the Passion of Christ we learn the evil that sin is, and the hatred that God bears it. We learn the necessity of satisfying for the malice and wickedness that is sin. Sin must be a horrible thing, to make Jesus Christ the God-man suffer so much.

By Christ's obedience He atoned for Adam's disobedience, for He was obedient unto death. "He was wounded for our iniquities; he was bruised for our sins" (Is. 53:5). The sufferings of Christ, in addition, serve as an example for us, to strengthen us under trials. Christ gave us an example of patience and strength. If we receive trials, we should accept them with resignation, in imitation of Our Lord, Who suffered so willingly for our sake. We can never have as much suffering as He did.

Churches are built in the form of a cross because within the sacrifice of the cross is re-enacted. Within them we remember easily the events that took place that day long ago, when Jesus Christ, Son of God, for love of us suffered and died on the Cross. Church spires lead us to "seek those things that are above" (Col. 3:1); they are surmounted by a cross, the symbol of our salvation; their bells call us to prayer, communion with God. The church interior is divided into three parts: the porch, where in former times those preparing for baptism and the penitents knelt; the nave, which is the central and main portion, for those attending the Holy Sacrifice; and the choir or sanctuary, where in former times the singers stayed, now reserved for the clergy, and separated from the nave by the communion rail or iconostasis. Taken from <http://www.catholicbook.com/AgredaCD/MyCatholicFaith/mcfc035.htm>

Part 3: The Resurrection of Jesus Christ : What do we mean when we say in the Apostles' Creed that Christ descended into hell? --When we say that Christ descended into hell, we mean that, after He died, the soul of Christ descended into a place or state of rest, called limbo, where the souls of the just were waiting for Him. Christ did not go to the hell of the damned, but to the "hell" of the just. In Holy Scripture, it was called "Abraham's bosom". St. Peter called it "a prison". We call it limbo.

Among the souls in limbo were Adam, Eve, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob; Joseph, David, Isaiah, Daniel, Job, Tobias, St. Joseph, and St. John the Baptist. They went to heaven at Our Lord's entrance upon His Ascension. Christ went to limbo to announce to the souls waiting there the joyful news that He had reopened heaven to mankind.

"He was brought to life in the spirit, in which also he went and preached to those spirits that were in prison" (1 Pet. 3:19). The souls in limbo could not go to heaven, which had been closed by Adam's sin. It was only reopened to man by the death of Our Lord, by the Redemption. The souls in limbo did not suffer pain, but they longed for heaven. After the release of these souls from Limbo, and their entrance into heaven, this Limbo for the just souls ceased to exist.

While His soul was in limbo, Christ's body was in the holy sepulchre. When man dies, his soul is separated from the body. When Jesus died, His body and soul were separated, but His divinity remained united to both body and soul. Christ's body did not corrupt in the tomb. It was in the holy sepulchre from Friday evening when He was buried, to Sunday morning, when He arose from the grave. This is why we say Christ rose on the third day, although He was in the grave for only three incomplete days.

When did Christ rise from the dead? --Christ rose from the dead, glorious and immortal, on Easter Sunday, the third day after His death.

Christ had often foretold His resurrection. He said of His own body; "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). Before entering Jerusalem He said to His Apostles that He would be put to death and "rise again on the third day" (Matt. 20:19). On the night of the Last Supper He said: "But after I have risen, I will go before you into Galilee" (Matt. 26:32).

Even His enemies knew that He had predicted His resurrection. This is why they obtained Pilate's permission to seal the sepulchre and set guards to watch it. They said to Pilate: "Sir, we have remembered how that deceiver said, while he was yet alive. 'After three days I will rise again'" (Matt. 27:63).

Today the entire Christendom celebrates Easter Sunday in memory of the Resurrection. It is the Feast of feasts, commemorating the completion of our redemption by Christ. Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday following the first full moon of spring; the feast therefore is moveable, and can fall between March 22 and April 25.

Why did Christ remain on earth forty days after His Resurrection? --Christ remained on earth forty days after His Resurrection to prove that He had truly risen from the dead, and to complete the instruction of the Apostles. Christ's resurrection is an undoubted fact on which rests the Christian faith.

St. Paul says: "If Christ has not risen, "vain then is our preaching, vain too is your faith" (1 Cor. 15:14). And according to St. John, an eyewitness: "Many other signs also Jesus worked in the sight of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:30-31) In the first place, Christ really died. His death was witnessed by many, both friends and enemies. It was proved by the soldier who plunged his spear into His side. It was communicated officially to Pilate. His bones were not broken, because He was found already dead. His Mother and disciples would never have buried Him had they suspected the least chance of life. Some unbelievers urge that Christ was dead only in appearance and after an interval recovered from His swoon and left the grave. The loss of blood following the scourging alone would have been enough to cause death, not to mention the wounds He received on the cross.

In the second place, Christ really came to life. On the first Easter morning He appeared to Mary Magdalen and the other women who sought Him at the sepulchre. Then He appeared to Peter. In the evening He walked with two disciples on the road to Emmaus. At night He appeared to the assembled Apostles. Nor were these witnesses easily deceived. The Apostles did not at first believe the women who told them the Lord had risen. They would not even believe their own senses, thinking the risen Saviour was a ghost. Christ had to call for something to eat, to prove that He was not a ghost. St. Thomas refused to believe the other ten Apostles, who had seen Christ first. He only believed when Our Lord appeared to him and bade him touch His wounds.

The Jews bribed the guards to say that while they were asleep, the disciples had stolen the body of Christ. Such an act was made impossible by Christ's enemies themselves. They had sealed and guarded the tomb. "So they went and made the sepulchre secure, sealing the stone, and setting the guard" (Matt. 27:66). Even supposing the guards to have fallen asleep, the great stone which covered the sepulchre could not have been moved without waking some at least of the guards. Finally, it is a remarkable circumstance that the guards were not punished for this breach of duty.

Christ really arose from the dead. For forty days He appeared to many. He conversed, walked, and even ate with them. He spent much time instructing the Apostles. One of His most important appearances was to five hundred disciples on a mountain in Galilee, when He gave the Apostles the command to go forth into the world and teach. The Evangelists have recorded nine apparitions: but it is evident from their writings (for example, Acts 1:3) that there were other and unrecorded occasions when Christ appeared. Countless of Christ's followers laid down their lives in testimony of the truth of the resurrection. "During forty days appearing to

them, and speaking of the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). Taken from <http://www.catholicbook.com/AgredaCD/MyCatholicFaith/mcfc036.htm>

Part 4: The Ascension : Why did Christ rise from the dead? --Christ rose from the dead to show that He is true God, and to teach us that we, too, shall rise from the dead. The Resurrection is the most important of Christ's miracles. He Himself chose it as the most conclusive proof of His divine mission; the Apostles appealed to it to confirm their teachings. The fact of the Resurrection, by itself alone, proves Christ God.

Christ said repeatedly that He is the Son of God; He said He would rise again from the grave. He did rise, unaided, by His own almighty power; therefore He is as He said, the Son of God. If He were an impostor, God would not have permitted Him to rise again. "But take courage; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Christ bore on His body the marks of the five wounds. The qualities of His risen body were: Agility. It could go with the quickness of thought to all places. Subtlety or spirituality. It was free from hunger, thirst, fatigue, and other needs. It could penetrate material substances. Clarity or brightness. It shone with splendor. Impassibility. It was immune to pain, disease, and death.

We are fortunate in having today for veneration a number of relics of the Passion.

Will all men rise from the dead? --All men will rise from the dead, but only those who have been faithful to Christ will share in His glory. Like Christ, we, too, shall rise from the dead on the Last Day, and our bodies will be reunited with our souls. "He who raised up Jesus will raise us up also with Jesus" (2 Cor. 4:14). "As Christ has arisen from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). Those who have been faithful to Christ will be rewarded with the glory of heaven; those that have been unfaithful will be punished in the depths of hell. "If you have risen with Christ, Seek the things that are above, ... not the things that are on earth." The rewards are given only to the faithful.

When did Christ ascend into heaven? --Christ ascended, body and soul, into heaven on Ascension day, forty days after His Resurrection. The Ascension took place from the Mount of Olives. Christ's Apostles and disciples were present. It was full daylight. He gave His followers His last instructions. Then He raised His hands and blessed them. He told them to preach the Gospel to all nations, and promised to be with them to the end of the world. While all looked on, He was raised up, by His own power, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. "Now he led them out towards Bethany, and... was carried up into heaven" (Luke 24:50-51). The disciples returned to Jerusalem with great joy. Their Master had returned to heaven in glory, and His arrival there had opened to His followers the heavenly gates.

He had earned for men infinite grace, so that they were now able to attain the friendship of God Himself. Christ the King had gone home to prepare a place for men in heaven (John 14:16; 2 Cor. 1:7). We celebrate the feast of the Ascension forty days after Easter, on Ascension Thursday.

What do we mean when we say that Christ sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty? -- When we say that Christ sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty, we mean that Our Lord as God is equal to the Father, and that as man He shares above all the saints in the glory of His Father, and exercises for all eternity the supreme authority of a King over all creatures. Christ as God is equal to the Father in all things. But even as man Christ is only next to God. Of Himself, Christ has dominion over all creation, his authority resting on the union of His divine and human natures in the Person of the Son of God. He is above all the angels and saints. To Sit at the right hand of anybody is a mark of honor from that person. "Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool" (Ps. 109:1,2). Christ ascended into heaven in order: To enter into the glory He had merited. To send down the Holy Ghost on His Church. To be our intercessor with the Father. To prepare a place for us in heaven.

What do we mean when we say that Christ will come from thence to judge the living and the dead? --When we say that Christ will come from thence to judge the living and the dead, we mean that on the last day Our Lord will come to pronounce a sentence of eternal reward or of eternal punishment on every one who has ever lived in this world. (Seventh Article of the Apostles' Creed: see Chapter 81 on General Judgment)

Jesus Christ will be our Supreme Judge because He is "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Apoc. 17:14). "For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father and then he will render to everyone according to his conduct" (Matt. 16:27). Christ's teaching has changed the face of the earth. One poor young man, teaching for three years in the hills and valleys of Galilee, and dying a shameful death, has brought light, love, peace, and hope into men's lives, even the lowliest. Before Christ the world was the abode of sin and vice, idolatry, polygamy, divorce, and slavery. However, the world today, although reformed by Christianity, is far from perfect. This is because many refuse to obey the teachings of Christ. It is our duty to make Christ better known and loved, so that all may "seek first the kingdom of God." Taken from <http://www.catholicbook.com/AgredaCD/MyCatholicFaith/mcfc037.htm>

Part 5: Pentecost: The Descent of the Holy Spirit After The dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Church was first visibly manifested on Pentecost Sunday, when He came down upon the Apostles in the form of tongues of fire. After the Ascension, the Apostles together with the blessed Virgin and disciples, men and women, numbering about 120 persons, gathered in the Cenacle, the upper room in Jerusalem where the Last Supper had been taken. There they spent the time in prayer, awaiting the fulfillment of Our Lord's promise: "Wait here in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

Jesus had promised to send the Holy Spirit to the Apostles. He said at the Last Supper: "It is expedient for you that I depart. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you" (John 16:7) . On Pentecost, ten days after the Ascension, the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles and disciples. On Pentecost three thousand members were baptized after the preaching of St. Peter. Many believed, because the Apostles had the "gift of tongues'

that is, they spoke in one language, but those of different races who listened heard what was said in their own different languages. We celebrate the descent of the Holy Ghost today as Pentecost Sunday, ten days after Ascension Thursday, fifty days after Easter. Pentecost means fifty.

The nine days in the Cenacle while the Apostles and disciples waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit were spent in prayer, the first novena in the Church. "All these with one mind continued steadfastly in prayer with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus" (Acts 1:14). In imitation of that first novena, it is our custom today to make novenas especially in preparation for great feasts. We also make novenas of petition or thanksgiving.

How long will the Holy Spirit dwell in the Church? --The Holy Spirit will dwell in the Church until the end of time.

"I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate to dwell with you forever, the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16-17) The Holy Spirit watches over the Church, protecting it from destruction. From the beginning the Church spread very rapidly. At the death of the Apostles, in spite of persecutions, it was known in all parts of the then civilized world. Thence it has spread to the ends of the earth.

St. Paul could say: "Yes, indeed, their voice has gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world" (Rom. 10:18). The Holy Spirit gave testimony of Christ, and strengthened the Apostles to give testimony of Christ.

Our Lord said, "But when the Advocate has come, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness concerning me. And you also bear witness" (John 15:26,27). By His descent, the Holy Spirit proved that all Jesus Christ had said and done was true, that He was indeed the Son of God. After the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles gave testimony of Christ by going all over the world, (Acts 1:8), preaching and suffering for Christ, meeting death joyfully (Acts 5:41; Rom. 8:18) , saying, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me." Taken from

<http://www.catholicbook.com/AgredaCD/MyCatholicFaith/mcfc038.htm>