



There's a lot of talk in church about "the Three Days," or in Latin, the "Triduum." These are our most holy of days. They make up our most important single celebration of the year. Easter. But exactly which three days make up the Triduum?

At first this sounds like a stupid question such as "What color was Napoleon's white horse?" or "Who is buried in Grant's Tomb?" Actually, it's a trick question. Most would say that the Three Days are Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. And that's wrong! (How could Easter Sunday not be one of the Three Days?)

The three days of the Triduum are counted using the Jewish way of keeping time: from sunset to sunset. So the first day of the Triduum is from sunset on Holy Thursday (The Mass of the Lord's Supper) until sunset on Good Friday. The second day is from sunset on Good Friday until sunset on Holy Saturday. The third day is from sunset on Holy Saturday (the Solemn Easter Vigil) until sunset on Easter Sunday (Paschal Vespers).

Does this make any difference — or is it only good Catholic Trivia? Here's the difference that it makes. We tend to think of the Three Days as commemorating separate, distinct events: On Holy Thursday we remember the Last Supper, on Good Friday we recall the Passion and on Holy Saturday, the Resurrection. But in our Liturgy, the church thinks about the Last Supper not as the last thing that happened on Holy Thursday, but as the first thing to happen on Good Friday. What new insights into the Eucharist do you have when you think of it as the first act of Christ's Passion? What new understanding of Sabbath — the day of rest — do you have when you reflect on the fact that Jesus slept in death from sunset Friday and all through the Jewish Sabbath, Saturday? And how might we spend our Saturday nights if we understood them to truly be the beginning of Sunday — not just during the Triduum, but year round? What does it mean when the deacon or cantor sings at the Vigil that because of the Resurrection, this night is brighter than any day?

These Three Days are a single moment. We walk (or crawl) into this moment on Thursday night and walk (or dance) out on Easter Day. In between, there's a flood of stories and songs, rites and rest, fasting and feasting. The Three Days are time out of time, the center of our year and of our life.