**9 things you need to know about Good Friday**

*by Jimmy Akin* *Friday, April 18, 2014*



*Good Friday was the day we were redeemed from our sins by Jesus' death on the cross. Here are 9 things you should know about the day and how we commemorate it.*

Good Friday is the most solemn day of the Christian year.

It is the day our Savior died for us.

It is the day we were redeemed from our sins by the voluntary death of God Himself at the hands of man.

Here are 9 things you need to know.

**1. Why is this day called "Good Friday"**

It's not for the reason you might think.

Despite the fact that "good" is a common English word, tempting us to say the name is based on the fact that something very good (our redemption) happened on this day, that's not where the name comes from.

Precisely where it does come from is disputed. The Catholic Encyclopedia [explains](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06643a.htm):

The origin of the term *Good* is not clear. Some say it is from "God's Friday" (*Gottes Freitag*); others maintain that it is from the German *Gute Freitag*, and not specially English.

It is also [argued](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=Good+Friday) that the name is based on a Medieval use of the word *good* where it meant "holy." Thus "Good Friday" would have come from "Holy Friday," the same way we have Holy Thursday and Holy Saturday.

**2. What happened on the first Good Friday?**

**Quite a number of things. During the night, Jesus had been arrested and taken before the high priests Annas and Caiaphas. It was during this time that Peter denied him.**

According to the gospels, Jesus:

* Was taken before Pilate in the morning
* Sent to Herod
* Returned to Pilate
* Was mocked and beaten
* Saw Barabbas released in his stead
* Was crowned with thorns
* Was condemned to death
* Carried the crushing burden of his cross
* Told the weeping women what would happen in the future
* Was crucified between two thieves
* Forgave those who crucified him
* Entrusted the Virgin Mary to the beloved disciple
* Assured the good thief of his salvation
* Said his famous seven last words
* Cried out and died

In addition:

* There was darkness over the land
* There was an earthquake
* The veil of the temple was torn in two
* Many saints of the Old Testament period were raised
* A soldier pierced Christ's side and blood and water flowed out
* Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body
* He was buried in Joseph's own tomb
* A guard was set over the tomb
* All Jesus' friends and family grieved at his death

If you’d like to read the gospel accounts themselves, you can use these links:

* [Matthew 27:1-66](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mt27.1-66)
* [Mark 15:1-47](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mk15.1-47)
* [Luke 23:1-56](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lk23.1-56)
* [John 18:28-19:42](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jn18.28-19.42)

**3. How do we celebrate Good Friday today?**

According to the main document governing the celebrations connected with Easter, [Paschales Solemnitatis](http://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/CDWEASTR.HTM%22%20%5Cl%20%223%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank):

58. On this day, when "Christ our passover was sacrificed," the Church:

* meditates on the passion of her Lord and Spouse,
* adores the cross,
* commemorates her origin from the side of Christ asleep on the cross,
* and intercedes for the salvation of the whole world.

**4. Are fast and abstinence required on Good Friday?**

Yes. Paschales Solemnitatis notes:

60. Good Friday is a day of penance to be observed as of obligation in the whole Church, and indeed through abstinence and fasting.

For more information on the requirement of fast and abstinence, [you should click here](http://www.jimmyakin.org/2011/03/annual-lent-fight-2011-ed.html).

**5. Are the sacraments celebrated on Good Friday?**

For the most part, no. Good Friday is the only day of the year on which the celebration of Mass is forbidden.

Paschales Solemnitatis notes:

59. On this day, in accordance with ancient tradition, the Church does not celebrate the Eucharist.

Holy Communion is distributed to the faithful during the Celebration of the Lord's Passion alone, though it may be brought at any time of the day to the sick who cannot take part in the celebration.

61. All celebration of the sacraments on this day is strictly prohibited, except for the sacraments of Penance and Anointing of the Sick.

Funerals are to be celebrated without singing, music, or the tolling of bells.

Baptism in danger of death is also permitted.

**6. What liturgical celebrations occur on this day?**

The principal one is known as the Celebration of the Lord's Passion. It includes:

* A liturgy of the word
* The adoration of the cross
* A Communion service using hosts already consecrated.

Paschales Solemnitatis notes:

63. The Celebration of the Lord's Passion is to take place in the afternoon, at about three o'clock.

The time will be chosen which seems most appropriate for pastoral reasons in order to allow the people to assemble more easily, for example shortly after midday, or in the late evening, however not later than nine o'clock.

**7. How is the cross venerated?**

Paschales Solemnitatis notes:

68. For veneration of the cross, let a cross be used that is of appropriate size and beauty, and let one of the forms for this rite as found in the Roman Missal be followed.

The rite should be carried out with the splendor worthy of the mystery of our salvation: both the invitation pronounced at the unveiling of the cross, and the people's response should be made in song, and a period of respectful silence is to be observed after each act of veneration—the celebrant standing and holding the raised cross.

69. The cross is to be presented to each of the faithful individually for their adoration since the personal adoration of the cross is a most important feature in this celebration; only when necessitated by the large numbers of faithful present should the rite of veneration be made simultaneously by all present.

Only one cross should be used for the veneration, as this contributes to the full symbolism of the rite.

During the veneration of the cross the antiphons, "Reproaches," and hymns should be sung, so that the history of salvation be commemorated through song. Other appropriate songs may also be sung (cf. n. 42).

**8. What happens after the Celebration of the Lord's Passion?**

Paschales Solemnitatis notes:

71. After the celebration, the altar is stripped; the cross remains however, with four candles.

An appropriate place (for example, the chapel of repose used for reservation of the Eucharist on Maundy Thursday) can be prepared within the church, and there the Lord's cross is placed so that the faithful may venerate and kiss it, and spend some time in meditation.

**9. Are other devotions appropriate to Good Friday?**

Paschales Solemnitatis notes:

72. Devotions such as the "Way of the Cross," processions of the passion, and commemorations of the sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary are not, for pastoral reasons, to be neglected.

The texts and songs used, however, should be adapted to the spirit of the Liturgy of this day.

Such devotions should be assigned to a time of day that makes it quite clear that the Liturgical celebration by its very nature far surpasses them in importance.

Read more: <http://www.ncregister.com/blog/jimmy-akin/9-things-you-need-to-know-about-good-friday1/#ixzz2zMCsA900>