

# Time of Crucifixion, length of Lent clarified



Father John Dietzen

Question Corner

**Q.** I'm reminded each Lent of a question about Jesus' death. According to St. Mark's account of the Passion, Jesus was crucified at 9 in the morning (the third hour) and died at the ninth hour.

This means he hung on the cross for six hours, rather than the three hours we usually assume and the other Gospels say. How is this explained? (New York)

**A.** Some differences in the Gospels' chronology of Good Friday are traceable to the various themes and theologies of the evangelists who wrote them. But the problem you raise isn't that complicated.

All three synoptic Gospels note the "darkness" over the land from noon to the ninth hour, 3 in the afternoon, after which Jesus died. Neither Matthew nor Luke indicates a time for the Crucifixion, but they describe several events after the Crucifixion but before the darkness, implying that the time on the cross was somewhat more than three hours.

As he does so often, John makes the whole picture much less neat. The core of Hebrew faith through the centuries had been that God is their only king, a belief reaffirmed every Passover. Significantly then, John tells us (19:14-15) that, at the sixth hour, when Pilate presents Jesus to the Jewish leaders as king, the "chief priests" reject the ancient adherence to God as their only king by declaring, "We have no king but Caesar."

There seems little question that this chronology was adopted by John to connect that rejection of God and Jesus to the sixth hour, the hour when Passover regulations went into effect for the Jews.

John's timing of the crucifixion and death of Jesus would thus be quite different than in the synoptics, but he makes no attempt to provide any further chronology.

In any case, of course, Jesus would have remained on the cross a considerable time after his death while Joseph of Arimathea made arrangements with the authorities to assume responsibility for his body.

**Q.** When does Lent officially end

now? In preparing our Holy Week programs, we are told Holy Thursday, not Holy Saturday, is the last day of Lent. Is that true? (Texas)

**A.** Yes. Lent concludes on Holy Thursday. Those of us who are older will recall that for a long time Lent ended at noon on Holy Saturday. This happened because the great liturgies of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday were all twisted out of shape, and were "celebrated" in relatively brief and informal ceremonies on the morning of those days.

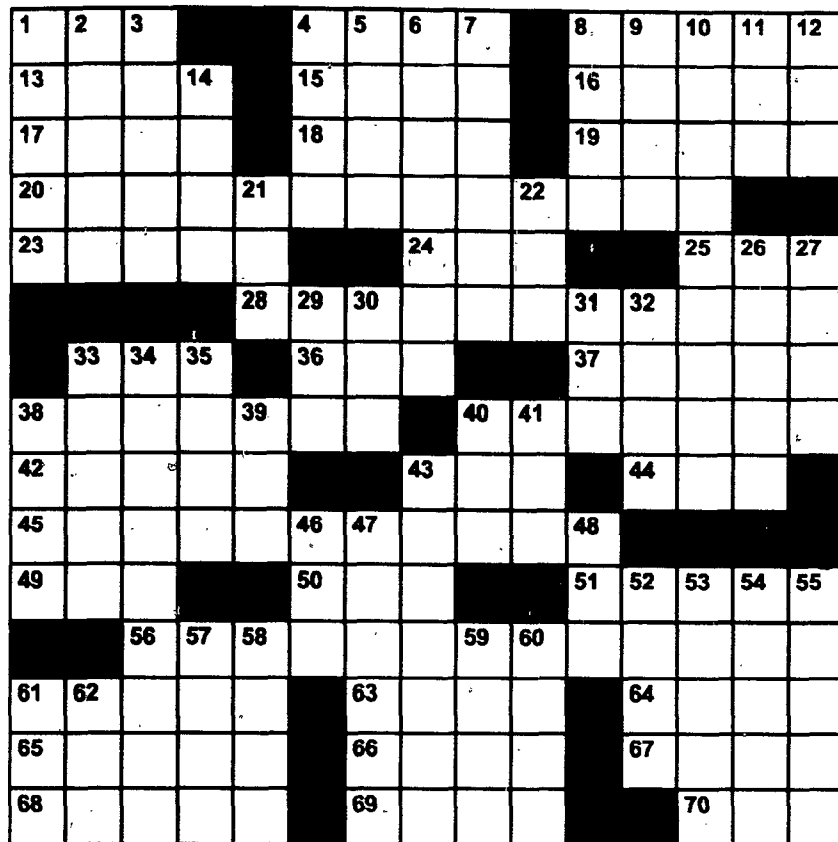
The earlier, long tradition of the church, however, was that the sacred triduum (literally the sacred three days) formed a separate holy time between Lent and the beginning of the Easter season.

Now, therefore, the Mass celebrating the institution of the Eucharist again takes place on Holy Thursday night, and the Easter Vigil liturgy is back where it traditionally belongs, during the night between Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday.

The General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar, promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1969, states, "Lent lasts from Ash Wednesday to the Mass of the Lord's Supper exclusive" (28).

In other words, Lent ends before the Mass on Holy Thursday evening. The triduum itself begins with the evening Mass on Holy Thursday and reaches its high point in the Easter Vigil, which begins the Easter season.

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## Catholic Crossword

### ACROSS

- 1 Church bench
- 4 "\_\_\_\_\_ comy as Kansas in August ..."
- 8 \_\_\_\_\_ Coeur
- 13 "As soon as \_\_\_\_\_ down, I fall peacefully asleep, for you alone, O Lord, bring security to my dwelling." (Ps 4:6)
- 15 Silvery fish
- 16 Test answers
- 17 The land of St. Patrick
- 18 Linen square which covers the chalice
- 19 Sign up
- 20 da Vinci's Holy Thursday painting
- 23 Too, to Pierre
- 24 Ref's call
- 25 Wind direction
- 28 Popes of this period were patrons of the arts
- 33 My gal
- 36 Mythical Irish personification of the sea
- 37 It's usually in the front of the church
- 38 \_\_\_\_\_ more than you can chew
- 40 At last
- 42 Kind of committee
- 43 Old Testament practice of destroying everything profane
- 44 \_\_\_\_\_, tooth for tooth (Ex 21:24)
- 45 Borgia pope
- 49 Hawaiian necklace

### DOWN

- 50 To do this is human
- 51 Kerchief
- 56 Michelangelo's opus
- 61 Sicilian volcano (var.)
- 63 \_\_\_\_\_ mecum
- 64 "\_\_\_\_\_ God and true man." (Nicene Creed)
- 65 Building block
- 66 New York canal
- 67 French river
- 68 Hiding place
- 69 Summer drinks
- 70 "\_\_\_\_\_ us pray"
- 22 Source of purchase (abbr.)
- 26 Climb
- 27 Weird
- 29 Fairy
- 30 Table decoration of silver, shaped like a ship
- 31 Saint, to Pablo
- 32 Wings
- 33 Crab walk
- 34 Pertaining to non-belief in God
- 35 Pope at the start of the Reformation
- 38 False god
- 39 Wood sorrel
- 40 Distant
- 41 Itemized bill from a co.
- 43 Saint of Clairvaux
- 46 Peter and Andrew used this
- 47 Computer part
- 48 Suffix meaning 'like'
- 52 Roman statesman
- 53 Possible Easter month
- 54 Employ again
- 55 Quick
- 57 Foot segment
- 58 "For our \_\_\_\_\_, he came down from heaven ..." (Nicene Creed)
- 59 Ms. Gourmet
- 60 Gentleman's grades?
- 61 Easy as \_\_\_\_\_
- 62 The Christian \_\_\_\_\_

Answers on page 11 (No. 35)



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