



HOLY THURSDAY

An evening Mass celebrating the Last Supper is celebrated on this day. During the Mass, it is customary to wash the feet of 12 old men, the way Christ washed the feet of his 12 Apostles. At this time, the bishop blesses Holy Chrism at the cathedral. After Mass, the altars are stripped bare in commemoration of Christ's arrest on the Mount of Olives. The Blessed Sacrament is then removed from the main altar and taken to a side altar to recall Christ's imprisonment.

Organs and bells are silenced and wooden clackers are used in their stead. In Greek Catholic usage, the Royal Hours Service, which includes the reading of the Twelve Passion Gospels, is celebrated in the evening. The evening meal on this day, although one of fasting, has a festive atmosphere also in memory of the Lord's Last Supper.

Pike is an indispensable food item because the bones of the head have the shapes of all the implements used in crucifying the Lord. The head of the pike is patiently taken apart, and these oddly shaped bones delicately removed. Curiously the ladder, cross and lance are single, while the nails are in pairs.

The legend is that the fish, which the fishermen caught on Thursday and prepared for supper on this day before the crucifixion was eaten at the last supper before Christ's death, and that is why it contains these implements. It was not permissible to talk on the Thursday before Easter, and if any conversation was carried on, it was only about serious and spiritual matters.