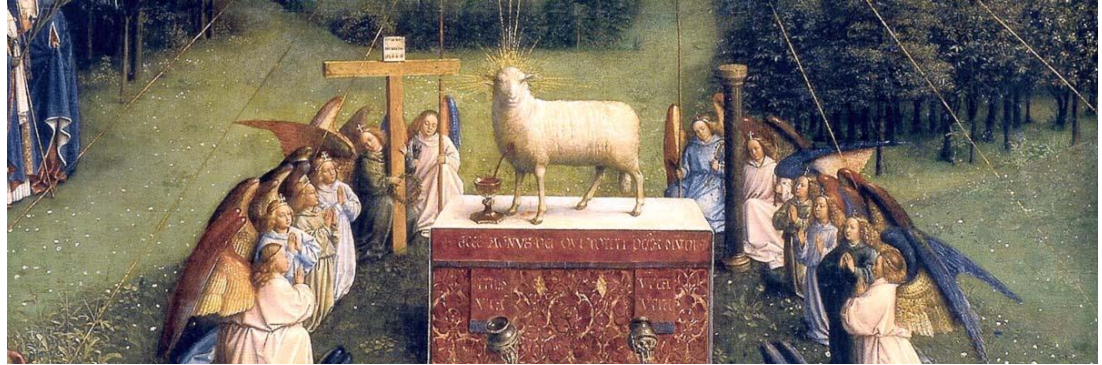


## What is the Paschal Mystery?



We hear the term *Paschal Mystery* all the time in the liturgical prayers of the Holy Mass, but what exactly does it mean? How do we explain the Paschal Mystery to our children, neighbors and friends?

The upcoming Lenten season is a perfect time to have this discussion. We have many mysteries in our Catholic Christian faith. These are beliefs that we accept as truth based on faith alone, because they have been revealed to us by God. These mysteries are central to our faith, but not always the easiest to explain to others.

When we speak about the *Paschal Mystery*, we are referring to God's plan of salvation which was ultimately fulfilled through four (4) events in Christ's life. Those four events are: *His Passion (his suffering and crucifixion), Death, Resurrection, and Ascension*.

Let's take a step back for a minute and look at the word *Paschal*. It comes from the Hebrew word PASACH which means to PASS OVER. This refers, of course, to the first Passover when God passed over the homes of the Israelites while striking down the firstborn of Egypt. In that case, the Israelites smeared the blood of a sacrificial lamb on their doorposts and lintels to signify their belief and dependence in the one true God. The sacrificing of an innocent and unblemished lamb became the means of their salvation and their deliverance from captivity in Egypt. In the same way, God sent His Son to be *our* Paschal Lamb [i.e., the Lamb of (from) God]. The essence of our faith is this: that Jesus came to die for us, to free us from sin, and so that we might have a new and eternal life.

### THIS WAS GOD'S PLAN FROM THE START

We can go back to the Garden of Eden just after the original sin of Adam and Eve. This is where God gives us the first glimpse of His salvific plan, by saying to the serpent, "I will put enmity [i.e., the state, feeling or condition of being actively opposed or hostile to someone or something] between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; they will strike at your head, while you strike at their heel." (Genesis 3: 15) And, we can look back at each of the covenants of the Old Testament, to see where God continued to reach out to humanity, again and again, in an effort to restore us into a perfect and loving relationship with Him.

At every Mass, which itself is a celebration of the Paschal Mystery, we remember and proclaim “the mystery of faith,” when we respond:

*Save us, Savior of the world,  
For by your Cross and Resurrection  
You have set us free.*

## **LIVING THE PASCHAL MYSTERY**

When we speak these words during the Liturgy of the Mass, we affirm our belief in the Paschal Mystery and much more. We don’t say “Save *me*, Savior of the world . . .” but save *us*. The Paschal Mystery tells us that we are not to be concerned only with our own personal salvation, but the salvation of all.

What is my role, then, in God’s saving plan?

How can I join in the Paschal Mystery?

We need only look at the instruction that Jesus gave to his apostles just before he ascended into heaven. He told them, “Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28: 19-20)

What does this mean for us? When we answer the call to holiness, when we live our lives according to the Beatitudes [i.e., the human be-attitudes], when we receive the Sacraments, we are living as Jesus commanded.

In a spiritual sense, whenever we personally die to sin, [we don’t give in to and prioritize] our personal desires [over God’s plan for us], and rise to a life centered on Christ, we are living the Paschal Mystery.

[This New Year of 2022, let each of us follow more closely in the footsteps of Our Lord Jesus, the Christ, so as to more fully understand and experience Christ’s Paschal Mystery (i.e., His Passion (his sacrificial suffering and crucifixion), Death, Resurrection, and Ascension into Heaven).

During 2022, what cross or crosses will we be called to carry and endure, in and with Christ?]

(SR: <https://www.catechistaide.com/2018/03/16/what-every-catholic-should-know-about-the-paschal-mystery/>)