

*Margaret's
First
Holy Week*



*The story of a stray that was born
on the Via della Conciliazione in Rome
and is adopted by the Pope, and how she then runs the
Vatican from museum to floorboard. For ages six and up.*

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A rectangular decorative border with a repeating floral and vine pattern in a light gray color.

Margaret's First Holy Week



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Margaret's First Holy Week

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To the child in all of us

—Jon

To my Benedictine family at St. Placid Priory

—Roy



CHAPTER 1

Snore! The Pope heard Margaret the second he walked into the apartment. He was just returning from morning Mass in his private chapel.

Margaret was curled up in a ball on the couch by the window, her head resting on palm branches the Pope left there a few days ago after the long, joyful procession through St. Peter's Square on Palm Sunday.

Margaret was exhausted. Cats are often, you know, exhausted!

It has been nearly a year since the Pope adopted Margaret, and Margaret adopted the Pope. They live together in the Pope's apartments in Vatican City, the tiniest country on earth.

The Swiss Guards, who protect the Pope, long ago learned to open doors for Margaret. The Pope's friends long ago began to regard her as one of the family. But . . . it is still true . . . there are some members of the Curia—people at the Vatican who help the Pope in his official work—who are not happy that Margaret is around. They believe the Pope is too important a person to be walking around with a cat.

And Margaret . . . well . . . she sometimes gets into trouble.

The palm branches that Margaret had been comfortably resting on were all that remained in the apartment, and the Vatican, from the celebrations of Palm Sunday. Margaret loved that day, watching people clap their hands and wave their palm fronds, and then the happy Mass. She especially enjoyed singing songs about Jesus the king.

But that was five days ago.

Today was Thursday. Margaret was waking up to the fifth day of Holy Week, and she could already tell that the feeling in the Vatican was changing.



While she stretched herself out of her slumber, Margaret heard the Pope talking with someone in the apartment. Father Felipe, the Pope's secretary, had come into the room. They were using a strange-sounding word—it was nothing she had ever heard in English or Italian. “*Tenebrae*” (pronounced *ten-e-bray*), she heard them each say.

“Darkness” and “shadows,” Felipe said, as well.

That's what *Tenebrae* means. It is a church service that takes place as Holy Week moves toward Easter, when the church is made completely dark. Margaret's ears perked up.

Is it scary? she wondered.

Then the Pope said, “This is one time when everyone should leave with a sense of sadness.” *Oh my!* Margaret thought. She was worried.

Tenebrae is a Latin word, and it means just what Margaret heard. It isn't scary, but it is supposed to be sort of sad. Holy Week begins with the joyful celebration and procession that remembers Jesus arriving in Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday more than 2,000 years ago, but then gradually moves toward his Passion.

Margaret didn't know what “Passion” meant. Not yet.