

Church of the Transfiguration

The Episcopal Church in Edgewood
The Rev. Dr. Gary C. Lemery • Rector

Dear Friends,

Now we come to the central mystery of our faith, the event by which we are saved. Christ was obedient even to death, death upon the cross. The death of Christ is a tragedy, revealing our own sinfulness; our rejection has sent him to his death on the cross. But the story does not end in Christ's death and our condemnation. By rising Christ from the dead, God has restored life to the world. As we seek to unite ourselves with Christ in his suffering and death, we can look with confidence to full resurrection with him. Christ's death then is not merely a tragedy; his acceptance of death makes it a way to resurrection. Because Christ is risen from the dead, the way of Holy Week is not only the way of the cross. It is also the royal road to victory. Our glory is the cross of Christ, for in him we have salvation, life, and resurrection. Through him we have been saved and set free.

That is why God has raised him to the heights and given him a name which is above every other name. For those who are joined to Christ by baptism, the Triduum - the three days of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Vigil [*Holy Saturday Night*] are considered the "solemnity of solemnities," the climax of the whole Christian year. It is the time when we should eat the paschal banquet in preparation for our journey to the promised land.

On Maundy Thursday, we are reminded of Christ's command to keep remembrance of him by the celebration of the Eucharist, as Jews were reminded at passover to keep the day in remembrance of what God had done for them. On Good Friday we celebrate Christ as the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. On Easter, the Church joyfully lingers over the event which has set her free.

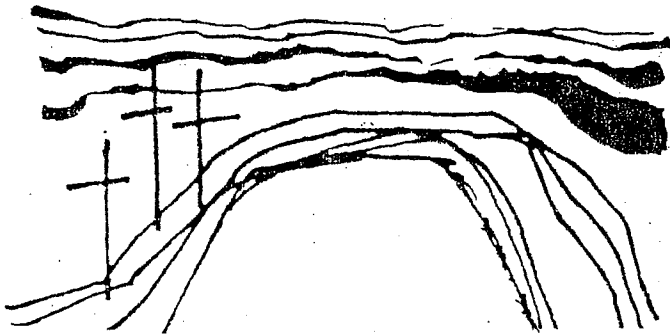
in His peace,
Dr. Gary

Holy Week

The last week in Lent has long been observed in both the Eastern and the Western Church as a commemoration of the death and burial of Christ. It is variously called by early writers the Great Week, the Holy Week, the Week of the Holy Passion and the Week of Forgiveness. In the East, Holy Week was distinguished from the rest of Lent by the extreme strictness of the fast.

Originally Holy Week seems to have begun with the last Sunday in Lent, but when this became Palm Sunday, the week began with the Monday. The various traditional rites, and particularly those on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday, probably evolved at Jerusalem during the fourth century, when access to the city by pilgrims became easier, and Christians were able to express their devotion to the Passion of Christ in ceremonial enactments. As time passed, the old observances throughout the week came to commemorate the historical events some hours before the time they actually took place, probably through a desire to do this in the early morning of each day.

In other Churches the service of Matins and Lauds of the last three days of Holy Week are known as Tenebrae and are sung by anticipation on the preceding evening of Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. The name means 'darkness' and comes from the very old ceremony of putting out the lights in the church one by one in the course of the service.



Holy Week Services

Palm Sunday April 5th

The Palms will be blessed and distributed at both the 8:00 A.M. and 10:00 A.M. Services. We ask that parishioners *gather on the outside front lawn* for the blessing of the Palms and then process into the church. In case of rain, we ask that you gather in the Patton Room.

Maundy Thursday April 9th

A Seder Supper will begin at 6:00 P.M. followed by The Celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Good Friday April 10th

The Ecumenical Good Friday Service will take place at Noon here at Transfiguration. The Offering from this Service goes to the Edgewood Ecumenical Fuel fund.

Holy Saturday April 11th

The Great Vigil of Easter will be celebrated at 7:00 P.M.

Easter Sunday April 12th

The Feast of the Resurrection of Our Lord.

The Holy Eucharist will be joyously celebrated at 8:00 A.M. and 10:00 A.M.

Palm Sunday

Hosanna -Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

MATTHEW 11:9

The name of Palm Sunday, or Passion Sunday for the day celebrating the entry of Christ into Jerusalem, is ancient, but the Liturgy of the day, including the Gospel, has always been completely concerned with the Passion. The commemoration of the events of the original Palm Sunday was observed in Jerusalem as early as the fourth century. The whole city went in the afternoon to the Mount of Olives and sat on the spot whence Jesus ascended, singing and hearing lessons from Scripture, and then went home in slow procession, all carrying branches of palm or olive and singing, 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord', and the people did not return to their houses until late in the day.

The earliest mention of the day in the Western Church is in service books of the seventh century of Gaul, (France) which contain a blessing of palms to be carried as symbols of the victory of Christ and protection against the devil, but no service for the procession is found until the ninth century.

An impulse to the observance of the day in the West was undoubtedly given by the fine Latin hymn by Theodulph, a Spaniard who was Bishop of Orleans in the time Charlemagne - 'All glory, laud and honour to thee Redeemer, King'. During the Middle Ages the procession of clergy and choirs usually set out from one church and proceeded to another, where the palms or olive-branches were blessed and distributed to the people, and then it returned from the church from which it started. Often a representation of Christ, such as the Gospel book or crucifix or a carved figure seated upon a wooden ass, was carried in the procession.

The day before this Sunday was known in England as Palm Saturday, when it was the custom for people to go into the woods and gather willow-branches with which they decorated their houses.

Maundy Thursday ~ The Lord's Supper

Christ came as a servant. He accepted his death for the redemption of mankind. His life and death were tests of endurance but his endurance is the result of his loving obedience to the Father's plan for the salvation of mankind. For Christians, all genuine service has its life and origin in Christ's acceptance of death for our sake. By laying down his life, Christ entered the glory of the resurrection to send forth his Spirit upon the world. Because of this, Maundy Thursday centers on Christ the servant, whose ministry is continued in his Church.

In most diocesan Cathedrals at noon, at the Bishop's Eucharist, the holy oils are blessed. With them, our continuation of Christ's ministry is revealed: with the chrism, the Church seals with the Spirit those who are to bear his life in the world (Confirmation), commissions those whose lives are to be a living sign of Christ's sacrificial service (Ordination), and brings his ministry of healing to the sick (Anointing of the Sick.) In the evening, at the Celebration of the Lord's Supper, it is not so much the institution of the Eucharist as the call of Christians to serve one another that is the focus of attention. Both the ceremony of washing of the feet and Saint Paul's stern warnings suggest, in the context of Holy Week, that without a life of loving service, our celebration of the Eucharist is to no more avail than the presence of Judas at the Last Supper. As the celebration of the triduum begins, we are reminded that keeping the feast will be costly.



Good Friday ~ The Passion of the Lord

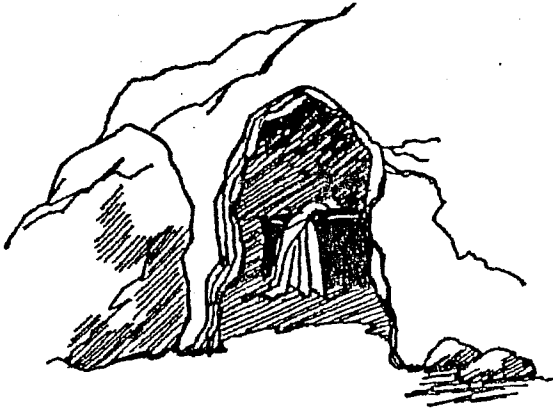


The Good Friday liturgy is full of paradoxes. The ceremonial is sparse and austere in the extreme, yet the clergy are robed in festive red. We commemorate the death of the Lord, and yet there is no Eucharist. The church mourns, and yet the solemn veneration of the cross is marked by the triumphant joy of the resurrection. The death of Christ is both our shame and our hope.

Accustomed as we are to understanding Good Friday solely as a day of mourning, its note of joy and hope can easily be overlooked. But as on Palm Sunday, it is Christ's triumph which is the dominant note. The red of martyrdom is used in honor of the victory which gives all martyrdom its meaning. The reading of the passion is from the Gospel of Saint John, who portrays Christ as the conqueror of sin and death. The prayers are for the world which Christ has redeemed. The cross is the cross of life and victory. And the liturgy concludes with a share in Christ's life-giving sacrifice in communion. Even while we mourn the death of the Savior, we know that the day can be called good, because the death of Christ brought life to the world.

For the Christian, no tragedy is ultimate, no loss is the final word.

Holy Saturday



From the beginning of the Church, Christians gathered on Holy Saturday after sunset to begin their Easter Celebration which continued well into the hours after sunrise on Easter Sunday. This night in which Christ rose from the dead marks the climax of mankind's religious history. This night of passover, when Christ passed from death to the glory of the resurrection, is the most important moment in the entire liturgical year. We celebrate our own passing over, by baptism and confirmation and the eucharist, from sin and death to newness of life in the risen Lord and the Spirit whom he sends. Moreover, if those who are already baptized have kept Lent in such a way as to become more truly God's people, the night reveals their splendor and anticipates what we will be when the night of this world has passed away. While it is past events which make the festal vigil possible, it is our present and future which is revealed in the celebration. With the glory of Easter Sunday Morning we joyously proclaim that in Christ we are a new creation; through him we have become a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people called to proclaim the wonders of our God. By the baptismal symbols of light and water, and the eucharistic symbols of bread and wine, the church dramatically proclaims that by rising from the dead, Christ has returned the world to the Father In Christ, through Christ, and with Christ, God's purpose for creation is fulfilled.

The Easter Season

Easter Sunday begins a Church Season that is filled with happiness and exuberance. The weeks between Easter and Pentecost are, above all other seasons of the year, the time of Christian joy: the joy of knowing that the Lord is Risen to everlasting life; the joy of sharing his resurrection through baptism, and of possessing the eucharist, the anticipation of the feast of the world to come; the joy of living with our hearts lifted up with Christ in a world redeemed and restored to unity with the Father, and of being witnesses in the world to the victory of Christ.

During Lent our attention is focused on the way to resurrection through death; during the Easter season we celebrate the liberty which is already ours though sharing in Christ's resurrection. Christ's triumph is the promise of our own, and so the Easter Season is a joyful anticipation of the victory that will be ours. Through baptism and the eucharist we already have begun to share in Christ's risen life, and so we are able to rejoice in hope. Through the entire season of fifty days, the Church never grows tired of rejoicing. Endlessly she sounds the triumphant Alleluia: no more penitential psalms now, no more fasting, for Christ has won his victory.

Christ, now risen from the dead, cannot die again, Death has no more power over him. The Church's pattern is that of the apostles, rejoicing in the company of the Risen Christ. Just as Christ encountered the disciples near the sepulcher, in the upper room, on the road to Emmaus, by the lakeside or on the mountains of Galilee, he is now in our midst, his presence proclaimed in Word and Sacrament. Our joy is the joy of his presence. The Easter Candle proclaims that Christ has conquered the darkness of death and is with us still.

