

An Introduction to the Liturgies of Holy Week



The Episcopal Parish of St. John the Evangelist Hingham, Massachusetts

The heart of the Christian faith is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We see in Jesus the full glory of God and the essence of human nature in its perfected state. The events we commemorate during Holy Week are the central pieces of our faith.

To fully participate in this life, we must immerse ourselves in the Christian story that is told in the week that precedes Easter. As a community of faith we walk with Christ and one another through bitter agony to triumphant joy. We walk not in great strides but in small steps, passing through each moment with conviction that we will reach the resurrection and that we will be forever transformed by the journey.

This booklet is offered as an introduction to the particular way we tell the story at St. John's. You are encouraged to refer to it throughout the days of Holy Week. We all have busy lives. But if there was ever a moment in the year to reflect upon the priorities of life, Holy Week provides this context. Walk with Christ and one another as fully as possible this week; come to the liturgies; be intentional about your devotions; and open yourselves to the potential power unleashed through your full participation in Christ's death and resurrection. The marvelous mystery of God in Christ awaits.

The Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday

The day's full name indicates its dual focus. The reading of the Passion Narrative (the story of Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion) is preceded by the commemoration of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The Liturgy of the Palms is the entrance rite but the Passion Gospel is the central focus. The euphoria and triumph of Jesus' entry is short-lived and the tone of the day changes dramatically. We, who moments earlier, shouted "Hosanna" now cry "Crucify him! Crucify him!" The stage is set for the rest of the week.

At St. John's, the service begins outside (weather permitting). Palms are blessed and distributed and we all process into the church singing the traditional Palm Sunday hymn *All Glory, Laud and Honor*. As the gospel is announced, the customary responses are omitted. Throughout Lent, the Alleluias have been silenced and now there is not so much as a "Glory to you, Lord Christ." A dramatic reading of the Passion takes place according to one of the synoptic gospels -- Matthew, Mark, or Luke are read on a three-year cycle -- with John always read on Good Friday.



Two ceremonial notes: palms are traditionally held during the reading of the Passion, and at the verse that mentions the arrival at Golgotha, the people stand. The rest of the liturgy follows as usual with the Great Thanksgiving and Holy Communion. It is still a Sunday and even though we have read the story of Christ's death, we proclaim the resurrection through the Eucharist and recognize the living presence that still sustains the Church.

Please keep your palms from this service and bring them to next year's Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper. During this festive occasion marking the last day before Lent, they are burned to make the ashes for the next day's Ash Wednesday Services.

Spy Wednesday

The Wednesday in Holy Week, traditionally known as Spy Wednesday, gets its name because this is the day on which Judas betrayed Jesus to the Sanhedrin. Because Judas is thought to be sneaky, his actions conjured up the image of a spy. The synoptic gospels all include an account of the betrayal - Matthew 26:12-14, Mark 14:10-12, Luke 22:3-6. This is how the Gospel of Luke recounts the events: "Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve; he went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers of the temple police about how he might betray him to them. They were greatly pleased and agreed to give him money. So he consented and began to look for an opportunity to betray him to them when no crowd was present." (Luke 22:3-6). We hold a simple, spoken service this day that draws upon the sense of intimacy in Judas' betrayal, even as we know that the events will soon spiral out of control.

THE TRIDUUM: THE THREE GREAT DAYS

The evening of Maundy Thursday begins the central moments of the Christian Year. The services of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Great Vigil of Easter are known as the Triduum (pronounced TRIH-doo-uhm), or the three great days, to underscore the unity of all that happens between the evening of Maundy Thursday and the first Eucharist of Easter at the Great Vigil. To participate in the entire span of worship is to enter into the heart of the story. It is also the most rewarding way to experience the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is incumbent upon Christians to take part in as much of these three days as possible.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

This service takes its name from the Latin word *Mandatum*, meaning "commandment." At the Last Supper, Jesus gives the new commandment, "love one another as I have loved you."

The foot washing that takes place at this liturgy reminds us of the specificity of love. It also pushes against our natural inclinations. Like Peter, people are often hesitant to have their feet washed; it is uncomfortable and awkward. Yet it is important to allow others to

serve us sometimes, as Christ offers to do for his disciples in the Upper Room and for us to serve others. Parishioners are welcome to have their feet washed during this service but it is certainly not a requirement. On a practical note, it is helpful to wear shoes that are easy to slip on and off to this liturgy.



This day also commemorates the institution of the Eucharist (i.e. Holy Communion/The Mass) at the Last Supper in the Upper Room as Jesus tells his followers to "do this in remembrance of me." After Communion is celebrated and distributed, what remains, the Reserved Sacrament of bread and wine, is kept for use on Good Friday. It is placed at the Altar of Repose in the Chapel. As the altar is stripped bare, we are reminded that Christ's crucifixion leaves a void in our church and in the world and we experience something of the disciples' sorrow as their Lord was taken from them. Following the liturgy, parishioners are welcome to sign up for The Watch in the chapel. Half-hour shifts are taken until midnight to heed Jesus' invitation in the Garden of Gethsemane to "watch with me."

GOOD FRIDAY

This day is both a day of mourning and triumph. Mourning because it is our sin that has crucified Christ but triumph because our Lord transforms the cross into the instrument of our salvation.

Children's Liturgy

Inviting children into the Good Friday story is an essential responsibility of both parents and the church. At this brief service we explain what is so "good" about this day - the fact that you cannot have the resurrection without the crucifixion. The story of Jesus' last hours is told in an accessible manner within the context of resurrection.

Stations of the Cross

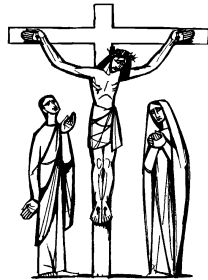
The devotion known as the Way of the Cross, or Stations of the Cross, is an adaptation to local usage of a custom widely observed by pilgrims to Jerusalem: the offering of prayer at a series of places

traditionally associated with our Lord's passion and death. The number of stations, which at first varied widely, finally became fixed at fourteen. Of these, eight are based directly on events recorded in the Gospels. The remaining six (3, 4, 6, 7, 9, and 13) are based on inferences from the gospels or pious legend. At St. John's we offer an opportunity to walk the outdoor stations at Glastonbury Abbey.

The Solemn Liturgy of Good Friday

The opening rite is primitive in its starkness. The church, stripped of its furnishings and adornment on Maundy Thursday, reflects the somber mood of a people whose Savior has been crucified. The clergy enter and all kneel for silent prayer before the opening acclamation and collect. By ancient tradition, The Passion according to St. John is read or sung on Good Friday.

The Solemn Collects, an extended form of intercession, take the place of the Prayers of the People. A large wooden cross is brought before the people and venerated — at St. John's this is done either through our prayers or by physically approaching the cross and touching it, kissing it, or simply kneeling before it.



During the veneration of the cross, the Reproaches, an ancient text of Western Christendom, are sung between the Priest and Choir. Communion from the Reserved Sacrament, set aside on Maundy Thursday, is austere as it is administered in silence. The church is left in silence, bleak and bare as the empty tomb.

Holy Saturday

This is a day of both silence and intense activity. The liturgy of the day is simple and brief, with no music or celebration of the Eucharist, and its focus is the tomb. At St. John's, as in almost every church, the silence quickly gives way to intense preparations. Good Friday leaves the church bare and empty. Within a few hours it is transformed with flowers, altar hangings, and candles so that the joy of Easter is proclaimed in beauty and splendor. Then after sundown, all is ready for the central liturgy of the year: The Easter Vigil.

THE FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

THE GREAT VIGIL OF EASTER

This service is the most ancient of the Church's liturgies. It is by far the most dramatic and moving service of the year as the movement from death and darkness to resurrection and light is powerfully told in word and action.

The service begins in a darkened church as a fire is kindled and blessed. The Paschal Candle, a symbol of the light of Christ through his resurrection, is lit. The Paschal Candle leads everyone into the church and individual candles are lit. The Exsultet, the great hymn that calls on all of creation to rejoice, is sung and readings follow. These include the Creation story, the story of the Flood, and the liberation of Israel through the Red Sea.



The liturgy continues with the blessing of the water at the baptismal font and the renewal of our baptismal vows. Through the water of Baptism we remember that we have died to sin and have been raised to new life in Jesus Christ; that we have "passed over" from darkness to light.

Then the central moment of the church year occurs: the announcement of the resurrection by the Celebrant with the words "Alleluia, Christ is Risen." The people respond "The Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia" and the veil of darkness is lifted, the Gloria is sung as the people are sprinkled with Holy Water, and the procession moves to the altar for the first Eucharist of Easter.

EASTER DAY

This day needs little comment. After the walk through Holy Week and its complicated rites, the Easter Eucharist is straightforward, distinctive only in the intensity of joy and hope in the readings, music, and the number of people present. Following the family service, we hold two Easter egg hunts — one for children under five in the Memorial Garden and one for older children in the playground.



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2022 HOLY WEEK & EASTER SCHEDULE

Zoom Morning Prayer is offered at 8:45 am throughout Holy Week.

PALM SUNDAY: SUNDAY OF THE PASSION – April 10

8:00 am – Holy Eucharist, Rite I with the Blessing of the Palms
10:00 am – Holy Eucharist, Rite II with the Blessing of the Palms, Procession and a Dramatic Reading of the Passion

WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK – April 13

10:00 am – Spy Wednesday Service of Holy Eucharist, Rite II

MAUNDY THURSDAY – April 14

7:30 pm – Holy Eucharist of the Last Supper with Optional Foot Washing and the Stripping of the Altar.

GOOD FRIDAY – April 15

12:00 pm – Spoken Liturgy of the Day
2:15 pm – Stations of the Cross at Glastonbury Abbey
4:00 pm – Children's Good Friday Service
7:30 pm – The Solemn Liturgy of Good Friday with sung Passion according to St. John, and Communion from the Reserved Sacrament

HOLY SATURDAY– April 16

10:00 am – Liturgy of the Day

THE GREAT VIGIL OF EASTER – April 16

7:30 pm - The Great Paschal Vigil with The First Eucharist of Easter, followed by Champagne & Jelly Bean Reception!

EASTER DAY: SUNDAY OF THE RESURRECTION–April 17

7:30 am – Holy Eucharist, Rite I with Hymns
9:00 am – Holy Eucharist, Rite II with Children's Choir
Easter Egg hunt between the services
11:00 am – Festival Holy Eucharist, Rite II with St. John's Choir