

Let's take a moment to just breathe.

This is hard. The liturgy is hard. It demands we take part, and maybe the worst part. Because we, along with the Jewish authorities and the crowds convict Jesus. We can't condemn him to death. Only the Roman authorities can do that. But we go along with the empire in ways we never thought we could or would. It is a dilemma which faces us even today.

Of course, we weren't there. Yet, this liturgy, and all those of Holy Week, call on us to a particular kind of remembrance. It is a participation, with all our senses, and all our being, in long-ago and at the same time timeless events. It has a special name, anamnesis, and it is a powerful way of participating in the life of Christ. And calling us to account. Because, while we were not there when Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, we can hail him as our king every day of our lives. But we can also crucify him, with words and actions that run counter to his great commandment to love God and love our neighbors, fully and without exception.

Yes, this is hard.

Holy Week is hard. Maundy Thursday calls us to gather, remember in that particular way of anamnesis, Jesus as servant leader, joining in the washing of feet and therefore extending his ministry into the 21st century through our commitment to serving our neighbors as Christ served us. We share in his last meal with his disciples, all the while knowing that that meal has continued for over two thousand years, nurturing us to be the body of Christ in our broken world, and continuing the ministry of Jesus in order to help to heal it. We sit with Jesus in the garden, basking in his presence in our lives, knowing what is to come in our sacred story, but also knowing death on the cross is not the end of the story.

We gather Good Friday. Read again the passion gospel. Again, taking part which calls us to think, even now, the part we play in our own daily lives. He was innocent. We rarely are. And yet, we are greatly loved by God, and so we will be saved from our sin and from death – with the promise of forgiveness and everlasting life.

We gather on Holy Saturday, in the morning, remembering Christ's body still laid in the tomb. But knowing all that was happening during that sacred time when Christ, not yet raised himself, was raising the saints that had gone before; pulling Adam and Moses and all the others we know from our Old Testament scripture, saints from the past, rising to new life along with Jesus. We remember and we hope – because we know the rest of the story.

We gather for the Great Vigil of Easter. Light the new fire. Send our regrets and our hopes as prayers into heaven. Listen, as a close-knit family does, to the foundational stories of our own beginnings. Renew the baptismal promises that made us Christian and all the ways they shape the lives God created us to live. We proclaim Easter and share in its first Eucharist.

Holy Week is hard. But it is also full of hope.

On Easter we will join with the women at the tomb. In that special kind of remembering, we, too, will discover it empty. Not with the surprise, the awe, that must have been theirs, but with the

confidence that God, who makes promises to us, keeps them. And, perhaps, in that particular remembering, we promise to keep our own, too. To love as we are loved. No matter what.

We know Christ present to us every time we share in communion. That is anamnesis, too. Not just a memory often invoked by a photograph or story of an even long past, but active participation in one that happens again and again. We become the body of Christ when we share the body of Christ. We are transformed and living as Christ's body we can transform the world, which is our purpose and mission as beloved children of God.

This is all hard work. It is also hopeful work. It is my hope that having gathered here this morning to begin, we continue together, supporting one another throughout this holy week, until we arrive, once more, at the empty tomb to proclaim the miracle of Christ risen again.