Meeting the Triduum ("Three-Day Liturgy"): Good Friday

How is the Good Friday liturgy similar or different to the Sunday Holy Eucharist service?

Similarities

- Four readings (Hebrew Scripture, New Testament, Gospel, and Psalm)
- Sermon

Differences

- No celebration of the Holy Eucharist
- No opening or closing hymn; no closing blessing or dismissal
- Veneration of the Cross
- Solemn Collects

How did this rite develop?

Early Church

- Originally, the "Christian Passover" commemorated both the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Friday and Saturday were fast days, and the fast was broken at the Saturday evening Paschal Vigil. Originally, there was no sense of the death and resurrection being commemorated separately.
- Egeria records the following in her travelogue on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem (381-384 CE). At the Martyrium, a large basilica built by Helen, mother of Constantine, over the site of the discovery of the true cross:
  8am – Noon Veneration of the Cross
  Noon – 3pm Service of Psalms, Lections, Hymns, and Prayers
  This was followed by a service in the church itself, then moving to the tomb where the burial account from John 19 was read, and then a voluntary vigil at the tomb through the night.
- A mix of practices emerge in the written liturgical records:
  - Readings appointed for the days between Maundy Thursday and Vigil
  - Gelasian Sacramentary includes a Good Friday rite, with the solemn collects, veneration of the cross, and communion from the reserved sacrament following the readings.

English Reformation Onwards

- The 1549 Prayer Book (produced during the reign of Edward VI) assumed the use of the daily office on Good Friday (i.e. no Eucharist).
- Despite the universal tradition of having no celebration of the Holy Eucharist on Good Friday, there has been no prohibition in any edition of the Book of Common Prayer. (Provision is made on p. 282 in the 1979 BCP).
- The 1979 BCP is the first Prayer Book to restore the Solemn Collects, which were not retained in this form in the 1549 Prayer Book.

Liturgical Music associated with Good Friday:

- Were you there when they crucified my Lord? (African American Spiritual)
- When I survey the wondrous cross (Isaac Watts)
- Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle
- O vos onmes (Victoria), Crucifixus (Lotti)
- Larger orchestral/choral works Stabat Mater (Pergolesi), St. Matthew Passion (Bach).

What is the theologically striking about Good Friday?

- The centrality of Christ's experience
- Liturgical attentiveness and receptivity
- Sustained, collective, prayerful lingering
- A taste of resurrection:

  O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation; let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (BCP, p. 280)