



An inviting safe community for all

*Welcome! We're glad that you chose to worship us today!*  
**Worship at Home: Palm/Passion Sunday**

Worship live at 10AM by video or phone, or on your own schedule using this bulletin as your guide.

VIDEO: View on any device live at 10AM on April 5  
([facebook.com/sjecmanitowoc/videos](https://facebook.com/sjecmanitowoc/videos))

*videos can also be viewed at a later time/date using the same link*

AUDIO: Listen by phone live at 10AM on April 5  
(call 1-312-626-6799 & enter Meeting ID 342 570 232)

**NOTE:** We invite you to find a branch, leaf, or other palm substitute to hold during the Liturgy of the Palms portion of Worship (or use the palm on back of bulletin).

## Welcome from Amma Diane

### Liturgy of the Palms

*Celebrant* Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord!

*People* **Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest!**

*Celebrant* Let us pray. Bless us with your strength and love, O Lord of our salvation, so this day of celebration will prepare us for the days of reflection that are coming. May we walk by your side from joy to death to life. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

*All* **AMEN!**

*Celebrant* When Jesus and his disciples had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, "Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey." The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."  
(Matthew 21:1-11)

*Celebrant* During this prayer and song I invite you to hold a branch, leaf, other palm substitute, or the back page of the bulletin as a symbolic palm.

Let us pray. It is right to praise you, Almighty God, for the acts of love by which you have redeemed us through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. On this day he entered the holy city of Jerusalem in triumph, and was proclaimed as King of kings by those who spread their garments and branches of palm along his way. Let these branches be for us signs of his victory, and grant that we who bear them in his name may ever hail him as our King, and follow him in the way that leads to eternal life; who lives and reigns in glory with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

*All* **AMEN!**

*Celebrant* Let us go forth in peace!

*People* **In the name of Christ. AMEN!**

♪ **All Glory, Laud and Honor** *The accompaniment begins and ends with a brass fanfare*

**All glory, laud, and honor to thee, Redeemer, King!**  
**to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.**  
**Thou art the King of Israel, thou David's royal Son,**  
**who in the Lord's name comest, the King and Blessed One.**

**All glory, laud, and honor to thee, Redeemer, King!**  
**to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.**  
**The company of angels is praising thee on high;**  
**and we with all creation in chorus make reply.**

**All glory, laud, and honor to thee, Redeemer, King!**  
**to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.**  
**The people of the Hebrews with palms before thee went;**  
**our praise and prayers and anthems before thee we present.**

**All glory, laud, and honor to thee, Redeemer, King!**  
**to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.**  
**To thee before thy passion they sang their hymns of praise;**  
**to thee, now high exalted, our melody we raise.**

**All glory, laud, and honor to thee, Redeemer, King!**  
**to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.**  
**Thou didst accept their praises, accept the prayers we bring,**  
**who in all good delightest, thou good and gracious King.**

## The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

*The people read together the roles of Disciples, Crowd, Servant, Bystander, Elders, Crowd, and Soldiers (all indicated in bold text.) Others read Narrator and Jesus.*

### Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

*Narrator One of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What will you give me if I betray Jesus to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.*

### The Passover with the Disciples

*Narrator On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying*

**Disciples Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?**

*Jesus Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, "The Teacher says, 'My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples'."*

*Narrator So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover meal. When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve; and while they were eating, he said,*

*Jesus Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.*

*Narrator And they became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another,*

**Disciples Surely not I, Lord?**

*Jesus The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.*

*Narrator Judas, who betrayed him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?"*

*Jesus You have said so.*

### The Institution of the Lord's Supper

*Narrator While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said,*

*Jesus* Take, eat; this is my body.

*Narrator* *Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying,*

*Jesus* Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

### **Peter's Denial Foretold**

*Narrator* *When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus said to them,*

*Jesus* You will all become deserters because of me this night; for it is written, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered." But after I am raised up, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.

*Narrator* *Peter said to him, "Though all become deserters because of you, I will never desert you."*

*Jesus* Truly I tell you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.

*Narrator* *Peter said to him, "Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you." And so said all the disciples.*

### **Jesus Prays in Gethsemane**

*Narrator* *Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples,*

*Jesus* Sit here while I go over there and pray.

*Narrator* *He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said,*

*Jesus* I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.

*Narrator* *And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed,*

*Jesus* My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.

*Narrator* *Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter,*

*Jesus* So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

*Narrator* *Again he went away for the second time and prayed,*

*Jesus* My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.

*Narrator* *Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. Then he came to the disciples and said to them,*

*Jesus* Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.

### **The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus**

*Narrator* *While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him." At once he came up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him. Jesus said to him,*

*Jesus* Friend, do what you are here to do.

*Narrator* *Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him. Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him,*

*Jesus* Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?

*Narrator* *At that hour Jesus said to the crowds,*

*Jesus* Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But all this has taken place, so that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled.

*Narrator* *Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.*

## Jesus Before the High Priest

*Narrator* Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, in whose house the scribes and the elders had gathered. But Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest; and going inside, he sat with the guards in order to see how this would end. Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days!'" The high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?" But Jesus was silent. Then the high priest said to him, "I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God."

*Jesus* You have said so. But I tell you, "From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

*Narrator* Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict?"

**Crowd** He deserves death!

*Narrator* Then they spat in his face and struck him; and some slapped him, saying,

**Crowd** Prophecy to us, you Messiah! Who is it that struck you?

## Peter's Denial of Jesus

*Narrator* Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant-girl came to him and said,

**Servant** "You also were with Jesus the Galilean."

*Narrator* But he denied it before all of them, saying, "I do not know what you are talking about." When he went out to the porch, another servant-girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders,

**Servant** This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.

*Narrator* Again he denied it with an oath, "I do not know the man." After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter,

**Bystander** Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.

*Narrator* Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath, "I do not know the man!" At that moment the cock crowed. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: "Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

### **Jesus Brought Before Pilate**

*Narrator* When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus in order to bring about his death. They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate the governor.

### **The Suicide of Judas**

*Narrator* When Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he repented and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. He said, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood."

*Elders* **What is that to us? See to it yourself."**

*Narrator* Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed; and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said,

*Elders* **It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since they are blood money.**

*Narrator* After conferring together, they used them to buy the potter's field as a place to bury foreigners. For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one on whom a price had been set, on whom some of the people of Israel had set a price, and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me."

### **Pilate Questions Jesus**

*Narrator* Now Jesus stood before the governor; and Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

*Jesus* You say so.

*Narrator* But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?" But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

## Barabbas or Jesus?

*Narrator* Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas. So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him." Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?"

**Crowd** **Barabbas!**

*Narrator* Pilate asked "What should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?"

**Crowd** **Let him be crucified!**

*Narrator* He asked, "Why, what evil has he done?"

**Crowd** **Let him be crucified!**

## Pilate Hands Jesus Over to Be Crucified

*Narrator* So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves."

**Crowd** **His blood be on us and on our children!**

*Narrator* So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

## The Soldiers Mock Jesus

*Narrator* Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying,

**Soldiers** **"Hail, King of the Jews!"**

*Narrator* They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.



## The Crucifixion of Jesus

*Narrator* As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him. And the people stood by, watching.

Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying,

**Crowd** You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.

*Narrator* In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying,

**Elders** He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, 'I am God's Son'.

*Narrator* The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way.

## The Death of Jesus

*Narrator* From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice,

*Jesus* Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?

*Narrator* that is,

*Jesus* My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

*Narrator* When some of the bystanders heard it, they said,

**Crowd** This man is calling for Elijah.

*Narrator* At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said,

**Crowd** Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.

*Narrator* Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last.

*At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said,*

***Soldiers* Truly this man was God's Son!**

*Narrator* Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

### **The Burial of Jesus**

*Narrator* When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

### **The Guard at the Tomb**

*Narrator* The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said,

***Elders* Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead,' and the last deception would be worse than the first.**

*Narrator* Pilate responded, "You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can." So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.

## The Apostles' Creed

*Celebrant* Let us join in the words of the Apostles' Creed.

*All* I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day Christ rose again; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. AMEN!

**Offering Our Gifts** *Gifts may be mailed to the church or sent through your bank. There are also online giving options on our web site [www.mysjec.com](http://www.mysjec.com)*

*Celebrant* Inspire us to always share your love through action, O God:

*People* **Strengthen us to always be an inviting safe community for all.**

♪ **If My People** *(last line intro) You may sing the first part or the echoes*

**If my people** (If my people) **called by my name** (called by my name)  
**turn from evil** (turn from evil) **and seek my face.** (and seek my face.)

**If my people** (If my people) **called by my name** (called by my name)  
**turn from evil** (turn from evil) **and seek my face.** (and seek my face.)

**I will hear,** (I will hear,) **I'll forgive,** (I'll forgive,)

**I will heal,** (I will heal,) **will heal their land.** (will heal their land.)

**I will hear,** (I will hear,) **I'll forgive,** (I'll forgive,)

**I will heal, I will heal their land.**

**We, your people** (We, your people) **called by your name** (called by your name)  
**turn from evil** (turn from evil) **and seek your face.** (and seek your face.)

**We, your people** (We, your people) **called by your name** (called by your name)  
**turn from evil** (turn from evil) **and seek your face.** (and seek your face.)

**Hear our cry,** (Hear our cry,) **Lord, forgive,** (Lord, forgive,)

**come and heal,** (come and heal,) **come heal our land.** (come heal our land.)

**Hear our cry,** (Hear our cry,) **Lord, forgive,** (Lord, forgive,)

**come and heal, come and heal our land.**

## Offering Our Prayers

*Celebrant* The Lord be with you.

*All* **And also with you.**

*Celebrant* Let us pray.

*All* **Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. AMEN!**

*Celebrant* Help us, O God our Savior;

*All* **Deliver us and forgive our sins.**

*Celebrant* Look upon your congregation;

*All* **Give to your people the blessing of peace.**

*Celebrant* Declare your glory among the nations;

*All* **And your wonders among all peoples.**

*Celebrant* Do not let the oppressed be shamed and turned away;

*All* **Never forget the lives of your poor.**

*Celebrant* Continue your loving-kindness to those who know you;

*All* **And your favor to those who are true of heart.**

*Celebrant* Satisfy us by your loving-kindness in the morning;

*All* **So shall we rejoice and be glad all the days of our life.**

*Celebrant* O God, you make us glad with the weekly remembrance of the glorious resurrection of your Son our Lord: Give us this day such blessing through our worship of you, that the week to come may be spent in your favor; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **AMEN!**

**Prayers of the People** *We'll sing the following as a response after each petition.*

The image shows a musical score for a response. It consists of two staves, a treble clef on top and a bass clef on the bottom, both in 3/4 time. The melody is written on the treble staff, and the bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment. The lyrics are: "O God, hear us; hear our prayer." The music is in a simple, hymn-like style with a key signature of one flat (Bb).

*Reader* In this holy season of Lent, let us offer our prayers to God, who leads us through the wilderness. For the church, that in this season of

repentance, it may turn from its own shortcomings to the transforming grace of God. God of love and mercy show us through the wilderness.

*People* ♪ **O God, hear us; hear our prayer.**

*Reader* For our world, that the angels might still wait on those who wander among the beasts of poverty, hunger, and all oppression. God of love and mercy show us through the wilderness.

*People* ♪ **O God, hear us; hear our prayer.**

*Reader* For our nation and our leaders, that they may have the courage to guard the rights of the poor and the powerless. God of love and mercy show us through the wilderness.

*People* ♪ **O God, hear us; hear our prayer.**

*Reader* For those who suffer, that they may be blessed by our willingness to enter their wounds, with Christ; and that we may be blessed by their willingness to share them. God of love and mercy show us through the wilderness.

*People* ♪ **O God, hear us; hear our prayer.**

*Reader* For the place where we live, that we open ourselves to examine, with discipline, the places in our community still waiting to be illumined by the light of Christ. God of love and mercy show us through the wilderness.

*People* ♪ **O God, hear us; hear our prayer.**

*Reader* For our special concerns and hopes that, in their naming, we may know the certain presence of God with us. God of love and mercy show us through the wilderness.

*People* ♪ **O God, hear us; hear our prayer.**

*Reader* For all who have died, that they may rest completely and joyfully in you, O God, even as they join with you to lead us through the wilderness. God of love and mercy show us through the wilderness.

*People* ♪ **O God, hear us; hear our prayer.**

*Celebrant* Lord, hear the prayers of your people; and what we have asked faithfully, grant that we may obtain effectually, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **AMEN!**

## General Thanksgiving

*Celebrant* Let us pray.

*All* Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. AMEN!

**Announcements** *see St James Weekly for updates and information*

♪ **Let Your Servant Now Go In Peace** *(full stanza intro; 9 times, slowing at end)*

Let your ser - vant now . go in peace, O — Lord,

Now . go in peace ac - cord - ing to your word.

Text & Music: Jacques Berthier, Taizé Community, 1980. ©1980 Les Presses de Taizé, GIA Publications Inc

**Sending Out** *(The customary "Alleluia" is omitted during Lent)*

*Celebrant* Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

*People* Thanks be to God.

**Thank you for celebrating with us today!**

***St James Episcopal Church, 434 North 8th Street, Manitowoc, WI 54220***

***The Rev Diane M Murray, Rector: 920.860.5152***

**[www.mysjec.com](http://www.mysjec.com)**

## **An Offering of Reflection by Presiding Bishop Michael Curry On Our Theology of Worship: Questions in the Time of COVID-19**

*Across The Episcopal Church the current Pandemic has given rise to many questions about challenges to our liturgical life. Bishops are being asked, “May we do this or that? Will you permit this or that way of celebrating the Eucharist or delivering Holy Communion to the members of our congregations?” Some years ago in an essay titled “Is There a Christian Sexual Ethic?” Rowan Williams observed that in the then current debates about marriage rites for same sex couples, this “permissible/not permissible” way of conducting the conversation was a dead end. The real (and much more productive) question for a sacramental people, he said, was not simply whether a given practice was “right or wrong,” but rather “How much are we prepared for this or that liturgical action to mean?” How much are we prepared for it to signify? Sacraments effect by signifying.*

*Sacraments are actions that give new meaning to things. The current questions about the way we worship in a time of radical physical distancing invites the question of what we are prepared for a given sacramental encounter to mean. Sacraments are communal actions that depend on “stuff”: bread and wine, water and oil. They depend on gathering and giving thanks, on proclaiming and receiving the stories of salvation, on bathing in water, on eating and drinking together. These are physical and social realities that are not duplicatable in the virtual world. Gazing at a celebration of the Eucharist is one thing; participating in a physical gathering and sharing the Bread and Wine of the Eucharist is another. And, God, of course, can be present in both experiences.*

*And that is surely the most important thing to remember. From the time of Thomas Cranmer, mainstream Anglicanism has insisted that the Holy Eucharist is to be celebrated in community, with no fewer than two people. In contrast to some medieval practices, the Prayer Book tradition was deeply concerned with reestablishing the essential connection between the celebration of the Eucharist and the reception of Holy Communion. Over time, of course, many factors contributed to a general decline in the celebration of the Eucharist well into the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and Morning Prayer became the common service of worship on the Lord’s Day. And while it is good and right that the situation has changed dramatically, that the Holy Eucharist has again become the principal act of worship on Sunday across our church, few would suggest that the experience of Morning Prayer somehow limited God’s presence and love to generations of Anglican Christians. There are members of our church today who do not enjoy a regular sustained celebration of the Eucharist for a variety of reasons other than this Pandemic — they are no less members of Christ’s Body because of it.*

*Practices such as “drive by communion” present public health concerns and further distort the essential link between a communal celebration and the culmination of that celebration in the reception of the Eucharistic Bread and Wine. This is not to say that the presence of the Dying and Rising Christ cannot be received by any of these means. It is to say that from a human perspective, the full meaning of the Eucharist is not obviously signified by them. Our theology is generous in its assurance of Christ’s presence in all our times of need. In a rubric in the service for Ministration to the Sick (p. 457), The Book of Common Prayer clearly expresses the conviction that even if a person is prevented from physically receiving the Sacrament for reasons of extreme illness or disability, the desire for Christ’s presence alone is enough for all the benefits of the Sacrament to be received.*

*Richard Hooker described the corporate prayer of Christians as having a spiritual significance far greater than the sum of the individual prayers of the individual members of the body. Through corporate prayer, he said, Christians participate in communion with Christ himself, “joined ... to that visible, mystical body which is his Church.” Hooker did not have in mind just the Eucharist, which might have taken place only quarterly or, at best, monthly in his day. He had very much in mind the assembly of faithful Christians gathered for the Daily Office.*

*While not exclusively the case, online worship may be better suited to ways of praying represented by the forms of the Daily Office than by the physical and material dimensions required by the Eucharist. And under our present circumstances, in making greater use of the Office there may be an opportunity to recover aspects of our tradition that point to the sacramentality of the scriptures, the efficacy of prayer itself, the holiness of the household as the “domestic church,” and the reassurance that the baptized are already and forever marked as Christ’s own. We are living limbs and members of the Body of Christ, wherever and however we gather. The questions being posed to Bishops around these matters are invitations to a deeper engagement with what we mean by the word “sacrament” and how much we are prepared for the Church itself — with or without our accustomed celebrations of the Eucharist — to signify about the presence of God with us.*

