

Holy Week Services at Christ Church

From early times Christians have observed the week before Easter as a time of special devotion. As the pilgrim nun Egeria recorded in the late fourth century, Jerusalem contained many sacred places that were sites for devotion and liturgy. Numerous pilgrims to the holy city followed the path of Jesus in his last days. They formed processions, worshipped where Christ suffered and died, and venerated relics.

From this beginning evolved the rites we observe today on Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. These services provide a liturgical experience of the last days of Jesus' earthly life, as well as the time and events leading up to his resurrection. Some Episcopal churches observe the service of Tenebrae on one of these days in Holy Week.

The three holy days, or Triduum (a three-day preparation for any feast, in this case, the Feast of the Resurrection) of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday are at the heart of the Holy Week observance. Holy Week ends at sundown on the Saturday before Easter, or with the celebration of the Easter Vigil. – *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church, ed.*

The Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday – Sunday, March 29, 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

Palm Sunday is a day of contrasts from celebration to solemn contemplation. We commemorate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem with palm branches as did those who welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem that day. (At Christ Church we also have a tradition of bagpipers who augment the celebration! They begin at 9:45am in the parking lot.) The service shifts as we move into commemoration of the last week of Jesus' life with a dramatic reading of one of the gospel accounts of Jesus' passion - suffering and death.

Stations of the Cross – Tuesday, March 31, 7:00 p.m.

Meditate on the way of Jesus during the last week of his life using prayers and the evocative new paintings by artist and parishioner Nachin Bone.

Tenebrae – Wednesday, April 1, 7:00 p.m.

The *Tenebrae* (Latin for *darkness* or *shadows*) is a service of psalms, and readings from the Book of Lamentations in the bible. It is rooted in the ancient monastic night and early morning services (Matins and Lauds) of Holy Week. The most conspicuous feature of the service is the gradual extinguishing of candles and other lights in the church until only a single candle, considered a symbol of our Lord, remains. Toward the end of the service, this candle is hidden, typifying the apparent victory of the forces of evil. At the very end, a loud noise is made, symbolizing the earthquake at the time of Christ's death, the hidden candle is restored to its place, and by its light all depart in silence. This is a powerful, contemplative service that lasts about 35 - 40 minutes.

Maundy Thursday – April 2, 7:00 p.m.

The word *Maundy* is derived from the Latin word, *mandatum* (commandment), and refers to Jesus giving the "new commandment" to "love one another as I have loved you" to his disciples. **The evening begins at 6:00pm with a simple supper** downstairs in the Parish Hall. The service itself commemorates the institution of the Sacrament of Holy Communion and

the great symbolic act of love, Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet. We both celebrate communion and have the opportunity to participate in the act of washing one another's feet. It is an incredibly powerful experience of servant love. The service concludes with the solemn "stripping of the altar" during which all the decorative furnishings on the altar and chancel are removed in preparation for Good Friday. (service lasts approx. 1 hour and 15 minutes)

Note there is also a simple service for children and their families at 5:30pm before the supper.

Good Friday - April 3, Noon and 7:00 p.m.

On Good Friday we commemorate the suffering and death of Jesus. It is a solemn day and yet "good" as we remember the depth of Christ's love for us. This year we are offering two Good Friday services. At Noon, we will host a reflective service of prayers including the Stations of the Cross.

At 7:00 p.m. we have a traditional one hour+ service with hymns, a Reading of a Passion narrative, the Solemn Collects (traditional centuries-old prayers for the world), Veneration of the cross, and Communion from the reserved sacrament (blessed at the Maundy Thursday service). All are welcome at either or both services.

Holy Saturday - April 4, 9:15 a.m.

On Holy Saturday, we reflect on the time that Jesus spent in death in the tomb with a very short yet powerful service of readings and prayers at 9:15 a.m.

Easter - April 5, 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.

"According to the great monastic Bede, the word derives from the Anglo-Saxon spring goddess *Eostre*. Christians in England applied the word to the principal festival of the church year, both the day and season.

Easter Day is the annual Feast of the Resurrection, the pascha or Christian Passover, and the eighth day of cosmic creation. Faith in Jesus' resurrection on the Sunday or third day following his crucifixion is at the heart of Christian belief.

Easter sets the experience of springtime next to the ancient stories of deliverance and the proclamation of the risen Christ. In the west, Easter occurs on the first Sunday after the full moon on or after the vernal equinox. Easter always falls between Mar. 22 and Apr. 25 inclusive. Following Jewish custom, the feast begins at sunset on Easter Eve with the Great Vigil of Easter. The Eastern Orthodox Church celebrates Easter on the first Sunday *after* the Jewish pesach or Passover (which follows the spring full moon). Although the two dates sometimes coincide, the eastern date is often one or more weeks later."

From the dictionary of the Episcopal Church

The celebration of the resurrection continues long after Easter day. The Easter *season* lasts for 50 days - often called the Great Fifty Days.