

# HOLY WEEK

He died that we might be forgiven

INRI

He died to make us good

This is My Body



He descended into Hell



MAUNDY THURSDAY

HOLY SATURDAY



GOOD FRIDAY

**May I take this opportunity to wish you all  
a moving and thoughtful Holy Week,  
and a joyful Easter Day**

*Fr. Tom Pyke*

## **Procession of Palms and reading of the Passion Gospel, Palm Sunday**

Palm Sunday is the opening act of the drama which is Holy Week. It is, on the part of Jesus, intentionally dramatic and public, and the local church should revel in being on show and causing a stir. But what is it all about?

The first Palm Sunday was in the week leading up to Passover, which by the time of Jesus had become a highly politicised event - the Jews were longing for their liberation from the Roman colonialists, while their leaders were concerned to keep the peace at all costs. To keep order in this fevered atmosphere, the Roman garrison in Jerusalem was increased and the Governor decamped from his residence in Caesarea on the coast. This movement of troops created a grand procession which would have entered Jerusalem from the north. There would have been armed men and horses, banners and trumpets. Jesus seems to have set out to create a burlesque version of this procession, entering the city at the same time from the south, a proclamation of his king power but expressed with children and donkeys and shouting and garments and palms strewn in his path. He is redefining what it is to be the righteous king, God's Messiah. On Good Friday he will carry on the argument, what it means to be king, as he is put on trial by Pontius Pilate.

We remember those events by walking as a rag-tail little army (Jesus would have approved) from Island Gardens DLR to Christ Church. Before we set off we hear the story of this (almost) triumphal entry into God's city, and we give everyone a palm cross which they can wave as they walk. We sing the ancient hymn 'All Glory, laud and honour' which has been sung on by the Church on Palm Sunday from the 9th Century.

Once we are in the church our service includes the reading of the Passion Narrative, a complete telling of the trial, the crucifixion, the death and the burial of Jesus. We read this in a dramatised form and the congregation takes the part of the crowd, calling for the death of Jesus. It is a very moving moment in the Church's year.

**When? Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> April, 10.45am**

**Where? Island Gardens DLR**

## **Stations of the Cross**

Churches of our tradition often have Stations of the Cross round their walls, telling the events of Good Friday when Jesus went to his death on Mount Calvary outside Jerusalem. These plaques are not there for decoration, but are put there as a 'mini pilgrimage' of the Way of the Cross. We can use the Stations at any time, but is a very meaningful thing to do in Holy Week, the week leading up to Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Day.

On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week we will be following the Stations in Christ Church. On the Wednesday we want to introduce Stations to children and to young families, so this will be more child-centred and informal and we will be concentrating on perhaps 4 'episodes' or stations.

From Ash Wednesday until Good Friday a booklet will be available in church so you can pray the Stations of the Cross as a private devotion.

**When? Monday 15<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> April at 7pm, followed by Mass**

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 5pm (for families with children)**

**Where? Christ Church (Nave)**

## The Liturgy of Maundy Thursday

From Palm Sunday onwards the ministry of Jesus focuses in on Jerusalem. This seems to be for a number of reasons which are all to do with how you interpret Jesus' death and resurrection. One reason is that Jerusalem had a bad record of treating the prophets, killing them and then putting their tombs on show as if the populace had nothing to do with their deaths. Jesus sees himself as part of that company of martyr prophets, and going to Jerusalem is a critique of bad religion (Luke:13:33). Another reason is more political - Jesus' presence and death in Jerusalem is a protest against the inhumanity of the Roman Empire, or against any structures of corrupt power.

Finally there is a story to be retold with a different ending, the story of Abraham's abortive sacrifice of his son Isaac. Abraham took Isaac up to Mount Moriah to offer Isaac, but God stayed his hand - Abraham's obedience and good intention was enough. Mount Moriah is at the heart of Jerusalem, today we call it the Temple Mount. Jesus comes there to offer himself, and this time the sacrifice will not be halted - God will carry through on his promises where human flesh and blood cannot. Jesus' total obedience to the Father in this will secure what flesh and blood also cannot, resurrection from the dead.

By the Thursday in Holy Week, called Maundy Thursday ('Maundy' from *mondatum* or 'commandment' - Jesus gives us a new commandment, to love one another) Jesus cannot withdraw from the drama of confrontation he has initiated. He meets with his disciples in a last symbolic meal, he prays to God for them and he gives them a new symbol of hope, his presence among us in the simple elements of bread and wine.

On Maundy Thursday the bishops, priests, deacons and lay readers of the Diocese meet in the morning for a service at St Paul's Cathedral. At this service they renew their vows of ministry among, and care of God's people. The Bishop also blesses three types of olive oil, one for anointing the sick, one for use in Baptism and one for use in Confirmation. Anyone can attend this service and support their clergy. It begins with a procession into the Cathedral at 10.30am.

At Christ Church we will mark Maundy Thursday in the evening at 7.30pm. The Liturgy we use remembers Jesus washing the feet of his disciples before the Last Supper, and his institution of the sacrament of the Mass. At the end of the liturgy, just as the table would have been cleared after the Passover meal, we strip the Altars of the church of any decoration.

The mood changes, and becomes sombre. As the final cloth is removed from the Altar, the Blessed Sacrament which was not been eaten but kept back is carried through to the St John's Chapel. It will be the presence of Jesus for us, so that we can kneel and pray with him as the disciples did in the Garden of Gethsemane before his arrest. The Watch will continue until midnight.

**When? Thursday 18th April at 7.30pm, followed by the Gethsemane Watch until midnight**

**Where? Christ Church**

## **Good Friday Services**

Good Friday can be hard work emotionally and physically - it certainly is for the clergy! On Good Friday we remember the closing hours of Jesus' earthly, his trial before the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate and King Herod, his scourging and his crucifixion. The Gospel accounts don't usually offer times of day for what is taking place, but in Luke's Gospel there is a spell of three hours from 12 noon to 3pm when darkness fell on the whole land, until the moment when Jesus died. We keep those three hours in church as a particularly holy time. At the beginning of creation God drove out the darkness as his first action. On Good Friday the darkness descends again - Jesus, the most wonderful person you could imagine is on the cross, but now God is working in the darkness, strangely, almost secretly, to bring about the salvation of men and women.

We begin Good Friday with the end of our vigil in front of the Blessed Sacrament in St John's Chapel. We round this off with a special form of Morning Prayer. This uses a Litany of Reconciliation taken from the liturgy of Coventry Cathedral. At 10 or 10.30am (this is yet to be confirmed) we meet as Christians from different churches for an act of witness. We then carry our large wooden cross through the community, saying prayers as we go, finishing at Christ Church where we lean it upon one of the outside walls of the church, for everyone to see.

From 12 noon we are in Church for the three hours. Our service is split two thirds/one third. The first two hours are a time of led meditation on a theme which mirrors what was going on on the Cross at that time. The last hour is set aside for the Liturgy of Good Friday, including the reading of St John's account of the Passion, the Reproaches, the Adoration of the Cross and Communion using the bread that was reserved the night before. Good Friday is unusual - the service ends without a blessing - Jesus has died, what is there to celebrate? Everything looks tragic, and not 'good' in any sense. Yet we persist in calling this day Good Friday, for we know it was good for us.

For the rest of the day the church is sombre and quiet. It mimics the silence of the grave where Jesus lay. Nothing will happen now until Easter Sunday at dawn. We might think Jesus dead and God defeated, but we would be wrong.

### **Walk of Witness**

**When? Friday 19th April at 10.30am,**

**Where? Mudchute DLR**

### **Three hours at the Cross**

**When? 12noon- 3pm**

**Where? Christ Church (come and go as you need)**

## **Easter Vigil and lighting of the Easter Fire, Easter Day Mass with Baptism**

Before it is light on Easter morning we gather at Christ Church for what is perhaps the most dramatic of all our worship services. We start the service at the church gate where the new fire is kindled. It is a tradition that this should be struck with flint and iron, so that represents something totally new, not simply transferred from another source of flame. This reminds us that Jesus really died, and really was buried - he didn't just appear to die. So his resurrection is just that, it isn't resuscitation of someone close to death, as some people claim, trying to explain away the resurrection.

From the flame we light a brazier which sends a pillar of flame up into the night sky, roaring and crackling with elemental power. It reminds us of God's pillar of fire that led the children of Israel from slavery in the land of Egypt, and as we stand around the fire, one by one we read episodes of the Passover and the liberation of God's people. As with all Old Testament readings what we are doing as we listen is asking ourselves 'where is it that this story of people's lives, slavery and freedom touches our life story - can we see the parallels because God is doing the same in our day to day experience?'

Once we have read all of the Passover readings we turn to the Easter Candle. This will burn in church throughout the Easter season until Pentecost, and then it will be lit for every baptism that happens in church, because Baptism too is a moment of celebrating Resurrection new life. The candle is decorated with a transfer that includes the date (because NOW is important to God), but it also includes the symbols for the beginning and the end of the Greek alphabet, because Jesus is the beginning and the end and all times, and all seasons are in his hand. The candle is finished off with five 'grains' or studs made from incense that represent the five wounds of Jesus on the Cross. The candle is lit very carefully (it is usually windy that early on Easter morning) and carried into church as we sing 'The Light of Christ. Thanks be to God'

One of the highlights for the clergy (I hope also for everyone else!) is the singing of the Exsultet. This is an extended piece of plainsong, completely unaccompanied, which celebrates the message of Easter, that Jesus has risen from the dead and here we are as brothers and sisters of a Christian community, enjoying what that means for us. The Exsultet takes weeks to learn, so if you hear the Vicar humming something between now and Easter day, chances are that is what it will be.

There will be a simple breakfast available after this service to keep up our energy.

Easter is, by tradition, the time for people to become members of the Church by baptism. It's possible to baptise new Christians at this dawn service, but we keep our Easter baptisms until the 11am service, when more of the church community is around. At the dawn service we bless the water of baptism and we renew our baptismal promises.

### **Easter Fire**

**When? 5.30am**

**Where? Christ Church**

### **Easter Mass with Baptism**

**When? 11am**

**Where? Christ Church**



*Christ is risen!*

*He is risen*

*indeed-*

*Alleluia!*