

Episcopal Parish of St. Mary and St. Jude

Holy Week, Day by Day



Holy Week, from Palm Sunday to Easter Day, is the climax of the Christian year and the greatest feast in the calendar; it even overshadows Christmas. Over the centuries the Church has celebrated these seven days with deep solemnity. The drama of our faith unfolds as the week goes on. In fact the three days from Thursday night until Easter morning are celebrated not simply as separate days but as one continuous feast, which in Latin is called the Triduum or "three-day Feast."

The liturgies of Holy Week and Easter are not to be missed. Mark them on your calendar and participate in them as fully as possible. The liturgies of Holy Week are much more than a trip down memory lane back to Jesus' time. We don't simply recall a dead hero and his bravery; we ask the Holy Spirit to come upon us so that what Christ won for us in that first Holy Week and Easter may be real and effective in our own lives today.

This article is intended to highlight the events and spiritual significance of the Holy Week and Easter liturgies. As we open ourselves to the Good News of our Lord's passion, death, and resurrection, our lives can be forever changed by the power of God's redeeming love.

*Lord, as we begin this solemn week, help us to follow the events of your
✠ Son's death and Resurrection in such a way that our hearts and not just our lips are turned towards you. ✠*



THE SUNDAY OF THE PASSION: PALM SUNDAY

April 9, 9:00 am, St. Mary's by-the-Sea



The Gospels record the events of the first Palm Sunday. Jesus, by now famous for his miracles and preaching, is cheered into Jerusalem and hailed as King. The crowds sing and spread palm branches or garments in his path as he rides on a donkey, fulfilling an ancient prophecy. Our service will begin with the blessing and distribution of palms, and a joyful procession. This practice dates to the 4th century.

But we must do more than simply remember Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Through the reading of the Passion we are drawn into the mystery of Christ's suffering. We ask that we too may be prepared to accept our own cross and follow Jesus' example of complete self-giving. We pray for a share in his suffering so that we may also share in his resurrection.



MAUNDY THURSDAY

April 13, 5:30 p.m., Church of our Father, Hulls Cove



The word "Maundy" reminds us of one of the two pivots of our celebration tonight. It is from the Latin *mandatum*, meaning command, and recalls Jesus' command to do what he did at the Last Supper — washing the feet of his apostles as a sign of service. In our Liturgy we wash the feet of anyone who wishes to participate, as a sign of our commitment to serve all our brothers and sisters as Christ did. The second element of our celebration tonight is the Eucharist. We recall that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper on this day.

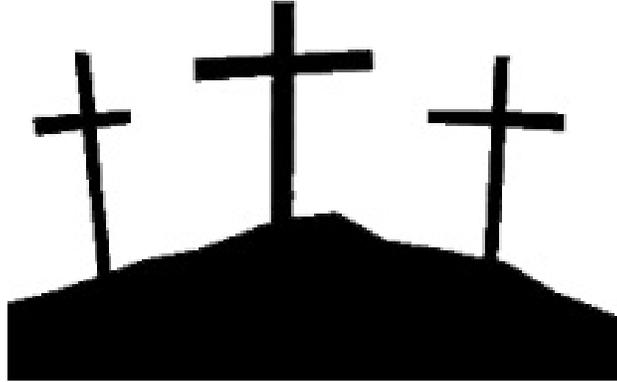
The Maundy Thursday Liturgy is marked by both sorrow and joy: sorrow, because this night our Lord was betrayed; joy, because this night he instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.

The Liturgy ends with the "Stripping of the Altar," recalling how at Jesus' arrest in Gethsemane all the disciples forsook him and fled, and how he was stripped of his garments before he was crucified. The Liturgy ends in desolation, and the congregation leaves the church in silence, contemplating the solemn events of this holy night. There is neither blessing nor dismissal, because the liturgies of the next three days (the Triduum Sacrum) are really one continuous service.



GOOD FRIDAY

April 14, 6:00 pm, St. Mary's by-the-Sea, Northeast Harbor



Jesus was an innocent man, yet by allowing himself to be a scapegoat he showed the depth of divine love. While we acknowledge human sinfulness on this day, Good Friday is no mere breast-beating day. Above all we glory in the victory that Christ has won over sin and death.

As we gather to hear the long and solemn proclamation of the Passion according to St. John, we prepare ourselves to pray for people of every place throughout our world who are victims of sin and evil. We venerate the cross, the instrument of death that became the means to life. And we receive the sacrament, consecrated on Maundy Thursday and reserved for this day, joining us together as a community of believers whose only boast is Jesus' victory on the cross.

Far from simply looking back on a sad day, we ask God to bring it alive once more in our minds and hearts. Tonight's liturgy comes to us from the earliest days of the church. The Passion according to St. John has been read at this liturgy since before the Council of Nicea (325 C.E.).



THE GREAT VIGIL OF EASTER

April 15, 7:00 pm, St. John's, Southwest Harbor



This is the holiest of nights: the night when the Israelites were delivered from bondage in Egypt and passed to freedom through the waters of the Red Sea, and the night when Christ rose from the dead.

This is the oldest liturgy of the Church. Centuries before anyone even thought of a "Midnight Mass" of Christmas, Christians had been gathering on the night before the dawn of Easter Day to keep vigil: to hear the amazing story of God's love in the creation and redemption of the world, to receive converts to the faith through baptism, and to meet our resurrected Lord in the sacrament of Holy Communion.

The people gather in total darkness, reflecting the darkness before creation, the darkness of the night when the Israelites were led to freedom by a pillar of fire, and the darkness of Jesus' tomb. The new fire is kindled and the Paschal Candle, a symbol of our risen Lord, is lighted and carried into the church. This is perhaps the most striking feature of the Vigil, as the light of our risen Lord is spread to candles held by the people. When everyone has gathered in the darkened church, the Exsultet, one of the oldest and loveliest Christian texts, is chanted.

This is followed by the reading of several passages from the Old Testament. These are chosen from the great sweep of God's salvation history — the story of creation, the flood, Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, Israel's deliverance at the Red Sea, God's promise of a new heart and spirit, and Ezekiel's vision of a valley of dry bones. Each of these readings offers us a way to understand God's works of salvation and the life we are offered in Jesus Christ.

The baptismal water is then blessed. If there are candidates for Holy Baptism, they are baptized at this time. Everyone else is given the opportunity to renew their Baptismal promises wherein we were made one with Christ in his death and resurrection.

At the moment of the Easter acclamation (*Alleluia. Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!*), all the lights in the church are turned on simultaneously and bells begin to ring as a sign of joy at the good news of the empty tomb. We now see clearly for the first time the Easter flowers and the altar. At last we celebrate with great joy the first Eucharist of Easter in which we meet our risen Lord, truly present in the sacrament of his body and blood.



EASTER SUNDAY

April 16, 9:00 am, St. Mary's by-the-Sea



A festive Sunday morning service with Baptism and Holy Eucharist, followed by an Easter egg hunt for the children.

*When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,
thy touch can call us back to life again,
fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.*

