



ST. ELIZABETH EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Worship in the household

According to a 3rd c. document called Hippolytus's Apostolic Tradition, people desiring baptism were often enrolled on the first week of Lent into a period of training that lasted for up to three years. The intent was to teach them about the Church, Scripture, the Sacraments and Christian ethics among other subjects. Once prepared, they could be baptized at the Great Pascha Vigil.

Today, Lent is still a time of preparation for the celebration and reappropriation of the Paschal Mystery. This is the Sunday that we hear of Jesus entering the holy city of Jerusalem to a welcome of psalms and praise, even as the path before him leads to humble self-giving, suffering and death.

This is the day that we greet Christ as our King of Glory, although we know his crown is thorns and his throne is a cross. And this is the day that we join Christ, from the glory of the palms by way of the dark road of suffering and death, to the glory of the Resurrection.

And so, it seems appropriate to keep in mind this sign posted by the Sea of Galilee. Those of us taking the bath of baptism consent to follow Jesus on this path will not leave the water as the same people who entered nor will we be safe walking the Paschal path that leads to eternal life. God's children are always at risk for changing and learning. It is our loving God who is responsible for our eternal and ultimate well-being as we walk the ever-challenging path of our baptismal relationship together.



Preparation

On Palm Sunday, we are used to having palm fronds for our church procession, but we will not have them this year. We can adjust. The first part of the Palm Sunday liturgy (Matthew 21:8) says that the people “cut branches from the trees.” Just so, for most of Christian history, people have used whatever was available: forsythia, olive, evergreen, pussy willow. And so, if you are able to get outside, you might gather a small branch or two (no flowers, please) for your table. Light a candle if you can and put a crucifix or cross on the table. If you are worshipping by yourself, keep in mind that our worship is always voiced in the plural – “we,” “us” and “our” because you are still an essential part of a church community at prayer. The worship of God and service to others binds us together.

Palm/Passion Sunday
5 April 2020



Centering

Make the sign of the cross and say: Lift up your heads, O gates! (+) and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in.

Pray hymn 154 aloud, a song of praise to the glory of God:

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.

The company of angels are praising thee on high,
And mortal men and all things created make reply.
The people of the Hebrews with palms before thee went;
Our praise and love and anthems before thee we present.

To thee, before thy passion, they sang their hymns of praise;
To thee, now high exalted, our melody we raise.
Thou didst accept their praises; accept the love we bring,
Who in all good delightest, thou good and gracious King.

After a moment, pray this prayer: Almighty and everliving God, in your tender love for the human race you sent your Son our Savior Jesus Christ to take upon him our nature, and to suffer death upon the cross, giving us the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant that we may walk in the way of his suffering, and also share in his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Word of God for Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday

The Gospel is the primary reading of the day and should always be read. The Gospel follows after a reading from Hebrew Scripture, a Psalm and a reading from the early church, should you choose to read all the texts for the day.

A reading from Isaiah: The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he wakens – wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught.

The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backward. I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me. It is the Lord God who helps me; who will declare me guilty?

Reader: The Word of the Lord

Response: Thanks be to God

(The response, prayed together or by alternating verses) Psalm 31:9-16 *In te, Domine, speravi*

⁹ Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am in trouble; *

my eye is consumed with sorrow, and also my throat and my belly.

¹⁰ For my life is wasted with grief, and my years with sighing; *

my strength fails me because of affliction, and my bones are consumed.

¹¹ I have become a reproach to all my enemies and even to my neighbors, a dismay to those of my acquaintance; *

when they see me in the street they avoid me.

¹² I am forgotten like a dead man, out of mind; *

I am as useless as a broken pot.

¹³ For I have heard the whispering of the crowd; fear is all around; *

they put their heads together against me; they plot to take my life.

¹⁴ But as for me, I have trusted in you, O Lord. *

I have said, "You are my God.

¹⁵ My times are in your hand; *

rescue me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me.

¹⁶ Make your face to shine upon your servant, *

and in your loving-kindness save me."

A reading from Philippians: Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Reader: The Word of the Lord

Response: Thanks be to God

A reading from Matthew: Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus said, “You say so.” 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.

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?” And they said, “Barabbas.” Pilate said to them, “Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” All of them said, “Let him be crucified!” Then he asked, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified!”

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.” Then the people as a whole answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!” So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

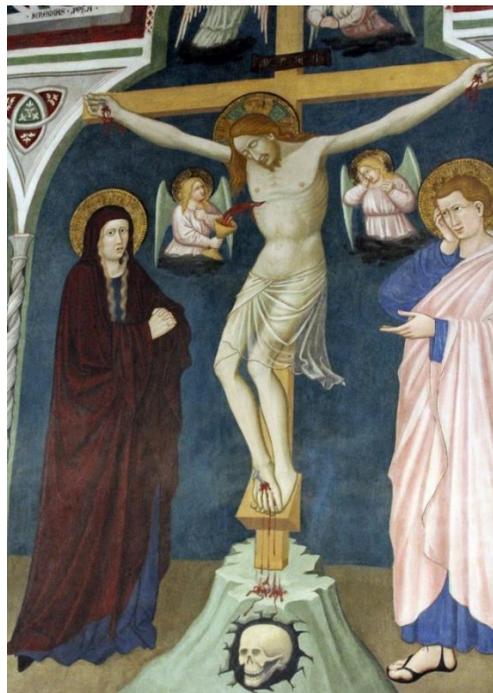
Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor’s headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and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

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. 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, "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." In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, "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.'" The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way.

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, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "This man is calling for Elijah." 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, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." 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, "Truly this man was God's Son!"



Sermon: The Rev. Dr. Robert David Hughes tells a story about the brilliant German Protestant theologian, Jürgen Moltmann. In the spring of 1967, Moltmann was lecturing an ecumenical group of theology students in Cambridge, Massachusetts. His book, *Theology of Hope*, still influential 50 years later, had just been published in English and had captured the attention of seminarians, clergy and theologians across the world.

Naturally, the audience assumed he would be focusing on this revolutionary book. Ever the scholar, however, Moltmann chose instead to talk about his new material, which would be published later under the title, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*. His new thinking was a creative and provocative approach to the Trinity that took the suffering of Christ on the cross as an act of Divine solidarity with human suffering.

Eventually, an audience member spoke. “Thank you for the interesting talk on the crucifixion, Professor Moltmann, but we had hoped to hear something about *Theology of Hope*.”

“Well, last time I was here,” Moltmann answered, “I discovered that Americans are always confusing hope with optimism, so I thought I should talk about the cross.”

“If true hope is to be born in us and to bear fruit in its turn,” Hughes says, “then we must indeed carefully distinguish it from optimism, and the cross is key.” Of course, as we begin this Holy Week under extraordinary circumstances, we may need to struggle a bit to turn away from despair as well.

Our typical liturgy for this morning usually begins with a recreation of a walk down the easternmost slope of the Kidron Valley, spreading branches and shouting “Hosannas!” Like the disciples and the crowd following Matthew’s Jesus down that road and into Jerusalem, we can still assume that we are escorting a Jewish activist who will re-establish an earthly monarchy by working to defeat the powers and principalities of the day. With them, we cry “Hosanna,” meaning literally “save us now.”

Once we have processed in with palms, singing “All glory, laud and honor to thee Redeemer king...”, we hear later in that same liturgy about Jesus walking down the westernmost slope of the Kidron Valley to the small hill of rocks just outside the city walls called Golgotha with some of the crowd, now disillusioned, crying “Crucify him!”

Between this morning and the morning of the Great Pascal Vigil, we, too, must pass with Jesus through the new teaching of Maundy Thursday, the unimaginable horror of Good Friday and the emptiness of Holy Saturday.

The hope of the resurrection, Pascha, lies at the end of that path. Just to be clear, there is no logical basis for hope. And yet hope is the Paschal gift, the crucial element of our faith born from the empty tomb on the other side of Holy Week.

We could choose despair in these intense and sobering times.

To accept reality is helpful, unless it decays into cynicism and from there, into a state of hopelessness. Consciously or otherwise, we can start to behave as though this situation is larger than God. And the more we feed that sense of despair, the more we surrender the covenant with God and turn away from the faithfulness of the One who promises.

We could choose optimism.

It is true that “this, too, shall pass” and looking to a better future is helpful, unless we stop acting entirely and sit waiting passively. Or unless we act like the crowds following Jesus into Jerusalem as though someone else will pull us out of this suffering. Consciously or

otherwise, we can start to act as though there is some potential inherent in human life that is a greater source of wisdom than the grace of God.

And the more certain we become in our own intelligence, as masterful as it may be, the more arrogant we can become until we lose our curiosity and our openness to God's presence with us, making all things new.

Hope is the third alternative.

If "optimism" walked down the Kidron Valley toward Jerusalem and "despair" made an appearance on Maundy Thursday and shattered our world on Good Friday, when resurrection life arose from the empty tomb, then the final response was "Hope."

Hope is not a feeling. Hope does not exist everywhere for all people. Hope comes from a specific perspective that God is not blind to our dreams or deaf to our prayers or separate from our being. That we exist at all is evidence of the creative energy of love. And hope is the courageous trust that, together with God, we can make the world better.

The same situation, the same people, the same observations can be described in quite different ways: Are empty streets evidence of the end of civilization? Or are they indications of people caring for the health of their neighbors enough to inconvenience themselves?

Are empty churches signs that God has abandoned us or are they demonstrations of the Holy Spirit moving God's children to consider new ways of interacting? Are we staying home and slipping into lonely isolation or are we staying separate and reaching out to others to make sure they know that we are still with them?

Is the spread of a virus to people across the planet so that we are united in the same concerns and risks the launch of anarchy and chaos or is it an opening to anchor ourselves in faithful humility that accepts the truth while stimulating our compassion?

God fills our lives – the ordinary, "normal" lives we wish would come back – God fills everyday life with support and challenges that create schools for learning love. This is the way we are formed as God's children in preparation for resurrection life when the fullness of God's heaven is realized.

And then, from time to time, life hands us a whopper. Life, not God. Life so shocks us out of our routine sometimes that we may be tempted to give up hope. Or we may deny the new reality by stopping all action to wait for something better to happen. Or we move out on our own getting ahead of God's grace as though we know better.

Instead, we take a moment.

A breath. Just a beat to see what is truly happening and then to move flexibly to merge our creativity with God's grace. Consenting to the activity of the Holy Spirit, we surrender our illusions and delusions; we release our resentments and judgmentalism; we let go of cherished but unwarranted expectations.

These are not life-tests sent from God. These times are, if we will open our eyes to see, crucibles for self-transcending growth. We can expect growing pains. In time, we can even expect the pain that often comes with healing; pain that is life-giving, yet enriching. Despair brings only destructive pain.

For Christians, the beginning of this Holy week is a reminder that we walk with Christ who is willing to share completely in the risk and suffering of being human. This week, we can choose to walk alone in despair, or we can stop walking altogether and wait, or we can insist on our rights to walk optimistically wherever we want.

Or we can walk down the Kidron Valley toward the suffering of the cross that mingles with the suffering of humanity all over the world. And from there, we will be ready to walk with the grace of the Holy Spirit that has always been beside us.

Only by staying present to the truth and focusing on hope can we begin to absorb the ironic lesson that God comes to us in humility as one of us. Despite our genuine concern and vulnerability, God comes to embrace us rather than to rescue us from life. Despite our expectations for displays of political and supernatural power, God comes in acts of forgiveness and mercy.

God comes anyway. God comes committed to loving us and to help make meaning out of our suffering regardless of the cost.

So, what I want to say to you is this: let the walk of our brother, Jesus the Anointed, be our walk through all of Holy Week. Don't skip the path from Palm Sunday through Holy Week. Pause, but don't stop, at the foot of the Cross. Notice, but don't linger in the emptiness and grief of Holy Saturday. Keep on.

And then, put on the mind of the Risen Christ and go with God with curious and cautious humility into a world in turmoil. Put on the mind of Christ to seek and serve Christ in all people in new ways. Put on the mind of Christ, and act together with the Holy Spirit to co-create a future that respects the dignity of every human being; a future that offers God's justice, righteous in principle and in action; one that thrives in peace for and among all people.

Let the walk of Christ be our walk of hope together.

Silence and stillness

Prayers for the church, the world, and all who are in need

These intercessions may be used, adding others in each household:

Leader: God the Father, your will for all people is health and salvation.

All: We praise and bless you, LORD.

Leader: God the Son, you came that we might have life, and might have it more abundantly.

All: We praise and bless you, LORD.

Leader: God the Holy Spirit, you make our bodies the temple of your presence.

All: We praise and bless you, LORD.

Leader: Holy Trinity, one God, in you we live and move and have our being.

All: We praise and bless you, LORD.

Leader: In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer, we pray for the Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean, the Most Reverend James Richard Wong Yin Song, Archbishop, Province of Indian Ocean & Bishop of the Seychelles

In the Diocesan Cycle of Prayer, we pray for St. Matthew/San Mateo, Auburn; Good Shepherd, Federal Way; St. Elizabeth, Burien.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: We pray for our neighbors at Navos, for Neighborhood House, for Hospitality House, for Operation Nightwatch, and for the safety of those in military service; for the safety and stamina of healthcare workers, for first responders and for their families. We pray for those on our long-term list.

Let us pray for our own needs and those of others, offered silently or aloud.

Leader: Lord, grant your healing grace to all who are sick, injured or disabled, that they may be made whole.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: Grant to all who are lonely, anxious or depressed, a knowledge of your will and an awareness of your presence.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: Grant to all who minister to those who are suffering wisdom and skill, sympathy and patience.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: Mend broken relationships, and restore to those in distress soundness of mind and serenity of spirit.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: Sustain and support those who seek your guidance and lift up all who are brought low by the trials of this life.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: We pray for the repose of the soul of Peggy Hunt [and _____]. Grant to the dying peace and a holy death, and uphold by the grace and consolation of your Holy Spirit those who are bereaved.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: Restore to wholeness whatever is broken by human sin, in our lives, in our nation, and in the world.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: You are the LORD who does mighty wonders.

All: You have declared your power among the peoples.

Leader: With you, LORD, is the well of life

All: and in your light do we see light.

Leader: Hear us, LORD of life:

All: heal us, and make us whole.

Let us pray.

A period of silence follows, and then:

Leader: Hear the prayer we offer for all your people. Remember in your mercy those for whom we pray: heal the sick, raise the fallen, strengthen the fainthearted and enfold in your love the fearful and those who have no hope.

In the fullness of time complete your gracious work. Reconcile all things in Christ and make them new, that we may be restored in your image, renewed in your love, and serve you as sons and daughters in your kingdom.

Through your anointed Son, Jesus Christ, our LORD, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit we lift our voices of thanks and praise:

All: Blessed be God, our strength and our salvation, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Pater Noster/Our Father/The Lord's Prayer

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, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer of spiritual communion

Most Holy Christ, we trust that you are truly present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. We love you above all things, and we long for you in our souls. Since we cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into our hearts. We embrace you as though you were already there and we unite ourselves entirely to you. Never permit us to be separated from you. *Amen.*

Concluding Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, by your death you have taken away the sting of death. Grant to us your servants so to follow in faith where you have first led the way, that at length we may commend our spirit into the waiting hands of God, fall peacefully asleep in you, and at your call rise to live and serve you in all eternity – you who abide with the Father and the Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

Blessing

Make the sign of the cross as you say:

As we enter Holy Week, (+) help us to walk the way of the Passion with courage, truth, and openness to a radical change of heart. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Giving Thanks at Table

You are welcome to use this thanksgiving whenever you are at table for a meal.

Leader: Prove yourselves innocent and straightforward, children of God beyond reproach.

All: Shine in this generation like stars in the sky.

Leader: God is generous with all His gifts and holy in all His works, living and reigning for ever and ever.

All: Amen

Leader: Grant eternal life to all who do good to us in your name.

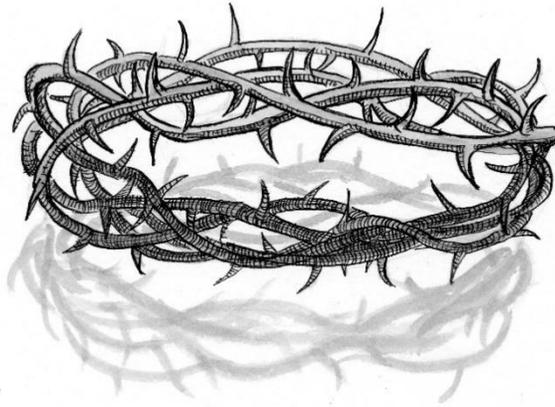
All: Amen.

Leader: Let us bless the LORD.

All: Thanks be to God.

Leader: May the souls of the faithfully departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

All: Amen.



“[T]he vocation of the baptized person is a simple thing: it is to live from day to day, whatever the day brings, in this extraordinary unity, in this reconciliation with all people and all things, in this knowledge that death has no more power, in this truth of the resurrection.”

~ **William Stringfellow**

Sources and references:

Opening image: Fresco, *Entry into Jerusalem*, Pietro Lorenzetti, c.1320, in the Church of St. Francis, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.

Opening acclamation: from Ps. 24, *The Book of Common Prayer 1979*

Biblical readings: from *The New Revised Common Lectionary*

Gospel image: Fresco of Crucifixion from St. Benedict's Cave (Sacro Speco), Subiaco, Italy.

Prayers of the people adapted from: *Common Worship* (The Church of England)

Prayer of Spiritual Communion: adapted from a prayer by St. Alphonsus Liguori

Concluding Prayer: Pohlman, Brad. *Meditations from the Cross: Good Friday at Luther Memorial*. Madison, WI: Luther Memorial Church, 2013.

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