

Rector's Column

*"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."
Romans 13:15*

Dear Friends,

The month of April holds some of the most moving and inspiring liturgies of the church year within the worship services of Holy Week. Each service of Holy Week, beginning with Palm Sunday on April 13th to Easter Sunday on April 20th, we walk with Christ through the journey and mysteries of his final days of mortal life to the transformative power of Creation as signified for us in the resurrection of Christ.

Palm Sunday (4/13, 8:00am and 10:00am services) tells the story of the sociopolitical forces that set the scene for Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, an event that is a peaceful yet powerful commentary and counterpoint to the violence and oppression of the occupying forces of the Roman Empire. The boldness of Jesus's followers is inspired by their hope and passion for justice in the face of seemingly insurmountable forces of corruption in leadership and governance. They literally take to the streets and head for the place representing the collusion of certain leaders of their faith tradition with the forces of empire. Having arrived at the Temple, Jesus's action of overturning the table of the moneychangers foreshadows an ultimate overturning of unjust and immoral systems.

Holy Wednesday (4/16, 8:00pm) at Trinity highlights the service of **Tenebrae**, a Latin word meaning "darkness" or "shadows". The gradual extinguishing of candles and light symbolizes the darkness and despair surrounding Christ's suffering and death, culminating in the darkness of his burial and seeming finality of sealing his tomb. When darkness is total, a loud noise (known as the "strepitus" reminds us of our very real human fears. Yet, even within dark times, our faith is revealed as a small flame within each of us that has the power to illuminate The Way forward.

Maundy Thursday (4/17, 7:00pm) is the first day of the **Triduum** (the Three Great Days leading to Easter Sunday). The word "Maundy" is derived from the Latin word "mandatum" meaning "command", referring to Jesus' imperative to his followers that they "Love one another as I have loved you". The setting is the Last Supper or the final celebration of Passover that Jesus shares with those gathered. The service includes the ritual washing of feet (or hands) in commemoration of Jesus' example of humility and love for his people. We are provided the opportunity to do the same for one another. Lastly, the service concludes with the solemn removal of all symbols, elements, and most furnishings from the altar area and sanctuary. Also referred to as "the stripping of the altar", these actions symbolize the abandonment of Jesus by his disciples and the stripping of Jesus by the soldiers before his crucifixion. Representing the humiliation of Jesus and the consequences of turning away from God, we are reminded that repentance is the essential spiritual preparation for new life.



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Good Friday (4/18, 7:30pm) is a solemn Christian holy day commemorating the crucifixion of Jesus and telling the story of that pivotal moment within our faith tradition. Mary, the Mother of God (in Greek referred to as the "Theotokos" meaning "God bearer") holds the body of her dead son within her arms and laments as only a parent can. The service includes the Veneration of the Cross as well as an opportunity to participate in a contemplative "Rite of Tears" featuring an icon of "Christ in Repose" depicting Jesus' body in the tomb. The actions of this service remind us to be deeply aware of "the shortness and uncertainty of human life" and that each of us will return to the earth from which we are made. Yet, in the words of the Burial of the Dead, we pray to God that "when we shall have served you in our generation, we may be gathered to our ancestors, having the testimony of a good conscience, in the communion of the catholic Church, in the confidence of a certain faith, in the comfort of a religious and holy hope, in favor with you, our God, and in perfect charity with the world" (BCP p. 504).

The Great Vigil of Easter (4/19, 7:30pm) is one of the earliest rites of the church and historically was the time when new members were baptized. The service includes a series of scriptural readings as an account of our salvation history, illuminating the generational heritage of Judeo-Christian faith and how we understand culmination of this history in Jesus Christ, the Messiah. A significant aspect of this service is the lighting and blessing of a sacred fire that in turn is used to light a new Pascal candle representing the resurrected Christ and that will be used throughout the coming liturgical year in the services of our church until next year's Holy Week. This service transforms the sanctuary from the tomb experience to the experience of the garden of resurrection", the New Creation in which we are to live in community as the Body of Christ. The cycle of life begins anew in this life, even as we anticipate the joy of Easter Sunday, an event that celebrates the promise of eternal life to come.

Easter Sunday (4/20, 8:00am & 10:00am) is a major feast day of Christian tradition celebrating the resurrection of Christ. Celebrated in the morning hours (often at sunrise), services held this day are filled with joyful music, colorful flowers decorating the altar area, and an Easter egg hunt for children following the 10:00am service. The coffee hours after each service provide a potluck brunch, and all who can are encouraged to bring favorite breakfast side dishes to share. After the emotional journey of Holy Week and some of the most foundational and intense teachings of our faith, the celebration of Easter Day is welcomed as the sun after long, dreary days. The Light of Christ ignited during the Great Vigil symbolizes the light of love that is to burn in our hearts – a love for God that inspires us to do the work given us to do, a love for one another that fulfills the command of Jesus to his disciples, and a love for ourselves that respects and cares for the unique creation that God has brought into being in us. Through us, the ministry of Christ continues the work of transformation in a world in deep need of the enlightenment, healing, and justice that only love can bring.

Two additional opportunities during Holy Week include:

Stations of the Cross (4/18, 12:00pm Noon) - If you have read this far then you may be asking, "Will there be Stations of the Cross during Holy Week?" The answer is absolutely, yes! Fr. Allen Hicks and I will present an opportunity for Stations of the Cross on Good Friday in Rogers Hall. This special service is intended to limit the need for participants to walk or stand for long periods of time out of consideration to those participants who may experience mobility challenges. A highly reflective service, each station considers historical and contemporary issues that relate to the theme of each. The One who was and is and is to come is remembered, seen, and informs our responses to injustice and hatred in our time.

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Indigenous Rite of Blessing & Healing (4/15, 1:00pm – 4:00pm) – On Tuesday of Holy Week, I will offer rites of blessing and healing from my Indigenous tradition, Shackan First Nation. This is the first time that I have ever offered this to members of Trinity, so it is essential that anyone interested to participate abide by the following requirements. Firstly, this is a private rite for individuals, one person at a time, which cannot be interrupted for any reason. Secondly, participants must preschedule a 15 minute timeslot through the Church Office. Thirdly, due to the spiritual preparations that I must undergo prior to providing the rites on Tuesday, **this is the only day and time period that I will offer this rite** during Holy Week. Finally, in order for members to approach the rite in a good way, participants must NOT consume alcohol or narcotics (that are not prescribed) during the 72 hour time period prior to the rite. Further, participants may not ask me any questions about the rite during their time in the rite – **this is NOT a time for cross-cultural education**; rather it is a time to focus one's individual spiritual wellness and personal spiritual journey in life. Receive the blessing for what it is.

In Christ's Peace,

Pastor Rachel

The Rev. Rachel Taber-Hamilton, Rector

