



HOLY WEEK

The heart of the Christian faith is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the events we commemorate during Holy Week are the central pieces of our faith.

This booklet gives an overview to the particular way we tell the story of Holy Week at St. John's Episcopal Church.



THE SUNDAY OF THE PASSION: PALM SUNDAY

The day's full name indicates its dual focus. The reading of the Passion Narrative (the story of Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion) is preceded by the commemoration of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The Liturgy of the Palms is the entrance rite but the Passion Gospel is the central focus. The euphoria and triumph of Jesus' entry is short-lived and the tone of the day changes dramatically. We, who moments earlier shouted "Hosanna," now cry "Crucify him! Crucify him!" The stage is set for the rest of the week.

At St. John's, the service begins outside at the Annex building. (weather permitting) Palms are blessed and distributed and we all process into the church singing the traditional Palm Sunday hymn "All Glory, Laud and Honor." As the Gospel is announced, the customary responses are omitted. We read the Passion according to St. Mark, St. Matthew or St. Luke (the readings are on a three year cycle, with St. John always read on Good Friday).

The rest of the liturgy follows as usual with the Great Thanksgiving and Holy Communion. It is still a Sunday and even though we have read the story of Christ's death, we proclaim his resurrection through the Eucharist and recognize the living presence that still sustains the Church.



THE TRIDUUM: THE THREE GREAT DAYS

The evening of Maundy Thursday begins the central moments of the Christian Year. The services of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Great Vigil of Easter are known as the Triduum (pronounced TRIH-doo-uhm), or the three great days, to underscore the unity of all that happens between the evening of Maundy Thursday and the first Eucharist of Easter at the Great Vigil. There is no formal dismissal after the Maundy Thursday or Good Friday services, indicating that each is part of a larger 3 part service. To participate in the entire span of worship is to enter into the heart of the story. It is also the most rewarding way to experience the death and resurrection of Jesus. Please take part in as much of these three days as you can.



MAUNDY THURSDAY

This service takes its name from the Latin word *Mandatum*, meaning “commandment.” At the Last Supper, Jesus gives the new commandment, “love one another as I have loved you.” The foot washing that takes place during this liturgy reminds us of the specificity of love. It also pushes against our natural inclinations. Like Peter, people are often hesitant to have their feet washed; it is uncomfortable and awkward. Yet it is important to allow others to serve us sometimes, as Christ offers to do for his disciples in the Upper Room, and for us to serve others. Parishioners are welcome to have their feet washed during this service but it is certainly not a requirement. On a practical note, if you do wish to participate in foot washing, it is helpful to wear shoes that are easy to slip on and off.

This day also commemorates the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper in the Upper Room as Jesus tells his followers to “do this in remembrance of me.” After the lights are dimmed in the church, the Altar Guild removes all altar hangings, candles, banners, etc. All crosses are draped or veiled in black.

As the altar is stripped bare, we are reminded that Christ’s crucifixion leaves a void in our church and in the world. The Maundy Thursday service concludes in darkness and silence.

As the service ends, we will carry the consecrated host to a side altar, where for several hours people can take turns watching and praying. This tradition remembers Jesus’ time in the Garden of Gethsemane, when his disciples fell asleep as he prayed and suffered. As Jesus’ new disciples, we will stay awake and watch and pray with him.



GOOD FRIDAY

This day is a day of both mourning and triumph. It is a day of mourning because it is our sin that has crucified Christ; simultaneously it is a day of triumph because our Lord transforms the cross into the instrument of our salvation.

Stations of the Cross

The devotion known as the Way of the Cross, or Stations of the Cross, is an adaptation to local usage of a custom widely observed by pilgrims to Jerusalem: the offering of prayer at a series of places in that city traditionally associated with our Lord's passion and death. The number of stations, which at first varied widely, finally became fixed at fourteen. Of these, eight are based directly on events recorded in the Gospels. The remaining six numbers (3, 4, 6, 7, 9, and 13) are based on inferences from the Gospel account or from pious legend.

We have been offered opportunities to walk the Stations of the Cross during Lent, usually on Wednesday evenings.

The Solemn Liturgy of Good Friday

The opening rite is primitive in its starkness. The church, stripped of its furnishings and adornments on Maundy Thursday, reflects the somber mood of a people whose Savior has been crucified. The clergy enter and all kneel for silent prayer before the opening acclamation and collect. By ancient tradition, The Passion according to St. John is read on Good Friday.

The Solemn Collects, an extended form of intercession, take the place of the Prayers of the People. A large wooden cross is brought before the people and draped in black. The church is left in silence, bleak and bare as the tomb.

Holy Saturday

This is a day of both silence and intense activity. There is no observance of the liturgy of the day. Good Friday leaves the church bare and empty. At St. John's, as in almost every church, the silence of Good Friday quickly gives way to intense preparations on Saturday morning. Within a few hours, the Altar Guild transforms the church with flowers, altar hangings, and candles so that the joy of Easter can be proclaimed in beauty and splendor. Yet all remains in darkness, hidden behind curtains, since it is not yet time to celebrate. Then after sundown, all is ready for the central liturgy of the year: The Great Vigil of Easter.



The Lord is Risen!

**THE FEAST OF THE
RESURRECTION OF OUR
LORD JESUS CHRIST**



**THE GREAT VIGIL
OF EASTER**

This service is the most ancient of the Church's liturgies. It is by far the most dramatic and moving service of the year as the movement from death and darkness to resurrection and light is powerfully told in word and action.

The Great Vigil consists of four parts:

- The Service of Light.
- The Service of Lessons.
- The Renewal of Baptismal Vows.
- The Holy Eucharist.

We begin outside a darkened church as a fire is kindled and blessed. The Paschal Candle, a symbol of the light of Christ through his resurrection, is lit. The Paschal Candle leads everyone into the church and individual candles are lit. The Exsultet, the great hymn that calls on all of creation to rejoice, is sung and readings from the Old Testament follow. These include the Creation story, and the liberation of Israel through the Red Sea.

Then the central moment of the church year occurs: the announcement of the resurrection by the Celebrant with the words "**Alleluia, Christ is Risen.**" The people respond "**The Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia**" and the veil of darkness is lifted (lights are turned on and the curtain hiding the altar is drawn away), the Gloria is sung and the service continues for the first Eucharist of Easter. The crosses that had been draped in black are now radiant in white. Before that Eucharist, however, we renew our Baptismal Vows to remember that we have died to sin and have been raised to new life in Jesus Christ; that we have "passed over" from darkness to light. The Easter Vigil is an especially appropriate time for baptisms, and we try to schedule a baptism for the service whenever possible.

If you have not attended the Great Vigil, you will experience Easter as never before, as you see the New Light come into being and we shout "**Alleluia. Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia**" and sing the Gloria in Excelsis for the first time since Ash Wednesday!



EASTER DAY

This day needs little comment. After the walk through Holy Week and its complicated rites, the Easter Eucharist is straightforward; distinctive only in the intensity of joy and hope in the readings, music, and the number of people present at the services.

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SCHEDULE AT ST. JOHN'S

Palm Sunday / Domingo de Ramos

9:00 AM — Service in English

10:30 AM — Service in English

1:00 PM — Misa en Español

Palms will be blessed and distributed
at all services.

Maundy Thursday

7:00 PM — Service with foot washing
and stripping of the altar,
in English.

8:30 PM — “Keeping Watch”
Prayer Garden in Narthex

Good Friday / Viernes Santo

NOON — Good Friday Service in English

7:00 PM — Viernes Santo Misa en Español

Easter Vigil

8:00 PM — Great Vigil service in English

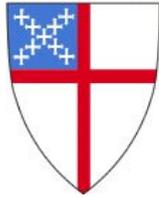
Easter Day / Día de Pascua

9:00 AM — Easter Service with choir,
in English

10:30 AM — Easter Service with choir,
in English

12:15 PM — Easter Egg Hunt

1:00 PM — Misa del Pascua en Español



St. John's Episcopal Church

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The Reverend Ann McLemore, *Interim Rector*
The Reverend Victoria Mason, *Deacon*
Philip Riley, *Organist and Choirmaster*
Fay Jones, *Director of Growth and Discipleship*
John Williams, *Sr. Warden*
Hal Hughes, *Jr. Warden*

Sunday Services: 9:00 & 10:30 AM in English

1:00 PM en Español

This booklet is modeled after and inspired by a similar booklet from
the **Episcopal Parish of St. John the Evangelist** in Hingham, MA.
<http://www.stjohns-hingham.org/>