



Explanation of Holy Week Worship Services

Holy Week is the conclusion of the Lenten season, as we relive in Scripture, liturgy and Sacrament the last days of our Lord's life.

PALM SUNDAY recalls two events. First is Christ's entrance into Jerusalem, in which he rode on a donkey while the people spread branches and garments on the road before him proclaiming "Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord" (Psalm 118:26). We remember this event by carrying palms, and celebrating the Kingship of Jesus Christ. As we celebrate Christ's Messianic entrance into Jerusalem, we remember that Mary, the mother of Jesus, rode a lowly donkey as she entered Bethlehem for Christ's birth. So too, Christ the Messiah humbled himself to ride a donkey through the gates of Jerusalem.

Palm Sunday is also "the Sunday of the Passion," and encompasses the events of the week that follow -- especially the day of the Crucifixion. On this day the story of the passion of Christ is traditionally read in parts.

MAUNDY THURSDAY: "Maundy" is an Old English derivation of the Latin *Mandatum*, meaning "a command," referring to Jesus' words at the Last Supper, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another" (John 14:34). The Maundy Thursday liturgy recalls the Last Supper, focusing particularly on the institution of the Holy Eucharist and footwashing.

At the end of this service, the Altar is stripped, and the extra Sacrament which has been consecrated for the Good Friday liturgy is placed on a special Altar of Repose where it remains until it is consumed at the Good Friday service. The Altar of Repose symbolizes the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus prayed in agony before his arrest.

GOOD FRIDAY is designated a "Fast" in the Prayer Book, and "observed by special acts of discipline and self-denial." It is the day of the Crucifixion, the darkest and most somber of all days in the liturgical year. The Gospel recounts the death of Christ. The service ends with worshippers departing in reverent silence, but awaiting the Resurrection.

EASTER is the celebration of our Lord's Resurrection and the life of the risen Christ, which we are called to carry into the world. It is the highest feast day of the Christian year, and the Easter morning services are bright and triumphant. Christ our Savior is Risen! **Alleluia!**