

On Easter Day we return to the worship room to celebrate with unrestrained joy. By raising Jesus from the dead, God says...

Yes

to Jesus' life
to Jesus' teaching
to Jesus' servanthood
to Jesus' kingdom
to Jesus' crucifixion



and God says **Yes** to all of Lent and Holy Week...

- to the REPENTANCE of Ash Wednesday
- to the DISCIPLINE of Lent
- to the SERVANTHOOD of the footwashing
- to the NEW COVENANT of the communion meal
- to the VULNERABILITY of the stripped altar
- to the UNITY of all who are drawn together by the crucifixion
- to the ROUGH HEWN CROSS as the sign of victory
- to the LIGHT which shatters the darkness
- to the BAPTISMAL DYING with Christ

Christ is risen!
Alleluia



In the Easter liturgy we say YES to God's YES. We affirm - the way of Jesus is the way of God! Baptized into Christ, we follow. Alleluia!

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER

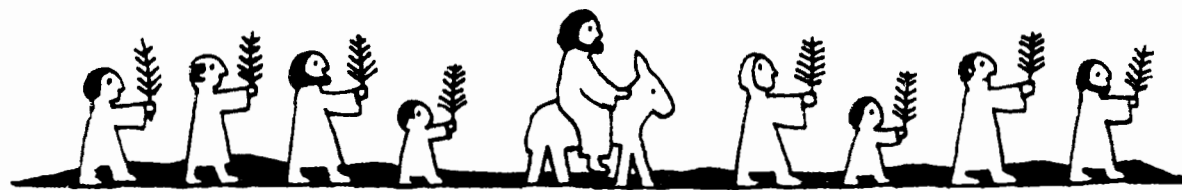


We are now on the Lenten journey - the pilgrimage which began on Ash Wednesday when we solemnly confessed our sins and received the ashes - the symbol of our brokenness and mortality. From this event we walk toward Holy Week and Easter where we will remember, celebrate and participate in Christ's death and resurrection.



Lent exists for the sake of Easter. During Lent we do battle with everything in our lives to which we must die. We also practice, in a very intentional way, the new life which is the gift of Easter. Thus we do the Lenten disciplines - prayer, fasting, meditating, reading, almsgiving, Scripture study, simplifying, advocacy for the poor and hungry, peacemaking, doing deeds of love and mercy.

Our Holy Week journey begins on Passion Sunday (often called Palm Sunday) when we carry branches into our worship room to commemorate our Lord's entry into Jerusalem. Ritually and symbolically the worship room becomes our Jerusalem. Here we will participate in Christ's suffering, death and resurrection. The mood of our entry is one of exultant joy. The Messiah marches to his glory - to be lifted up to draw the whole world to himself. After the procession we read the passion account, the story in which we will participate during the coming days.



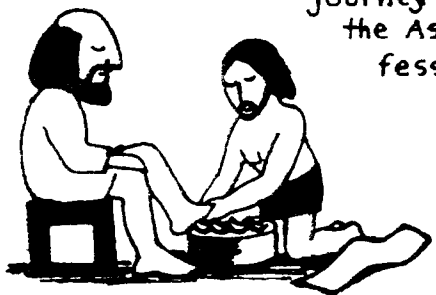
During Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week, we solemnly contemplate the meaning of Christ's passion. We do this either in solitude, in a family grouping or in quiet services of holy communion with our congregation.

On Thursday we begin **THE TRIDUUM** which means **THE THREE DAYS**. The Triduum includes Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Eve. The three liturgies during these days are one liturgy. No benediction separates them. We leave the the worship room for a while to return and continue celebrating the great mystery of our redemption.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

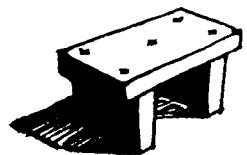
Maundy means "command." On this day Jesus commanded his disciples to wash one another's feet.

We begin with confession and absolution. The absolution marks the end of our Lenten journey which began with the Ash Wednesday confession of sin.



The washing of feet teaches servanthood, the life we live when we are united to Christ's death and resurrection.

We share the eucharist because on this night Jesus instituted the Supper saying "THIS IS MY BODY" and "THIS IS MY BLOOD." The white liturgical color tells us - this meal is a foretaste of Easter!



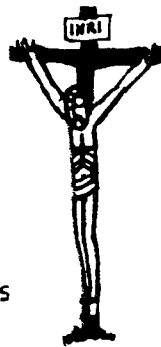
As Psalm 22 is chanted, the altar is stripped and all decorations are removed. We are reminded that Christ walked from the supper to his humiliation and death.

If we are united to him, we must also die. We must also give up everything.

We exit in silence...

GOOD FRIDAY

We return in silence to a barren worship room. As we hear the passion story according to Saint John, we see the crucifixion as the glorification of Jesus. Lifted up, he draws the whole world to himself.



We pray the bidding prayer which includes petitions for everyone in the world. Thus we affirm - Christ died for all!

A rough-hewn cross is carried into the worship room. In solemn adoration we behold the cross on which was hung the salvation of the whole world.



In silence we meditate on the mystery of the crucified savior. After a closing hymn of victory and a final response of adoration...

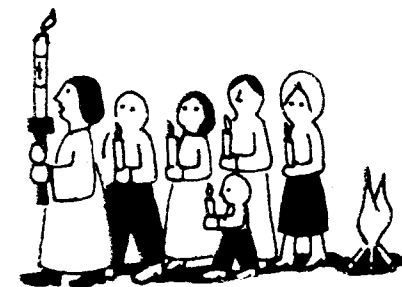
We exit in silence...

~~~~~ EASTER EVE ~~~~~

Now we reach the pinnacle of our three day celebration (and the high point of the church year). On this most holy night we make passage with Christ from death to life. The Easter Eve Vigil, the Christian Passover and the most festive of all liturgies in the early church, includes:

THE SERVICE OF LIGHT

Outside the worship room the Easter Candle (Paschal Candle) is lit from a "new fire." With candles lit from the Easter candle, we process into the dark and barren sanctuary. The light of Christ breaks the darkness of sin and death! Through the words of the glorious and ancient paschal hymn of praise we join all creation in praising God for the mystery of our redemption.

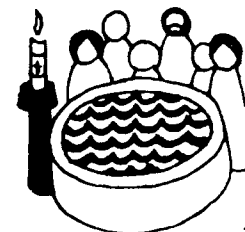


THE SERVICE OF READINGS

We read the passages from the Hebrew Scriptures which were used by the early church to instruct baptismal candidates. The lessons help us to understand our own baptismal passage from death to life.

THE SERVICE OF BAPTISM

On this night when Christ passed from death to life, baptismal candidates enter the water to die and rise with Christ. The rest of us renew the covenant of our baptism. Water is sprinkled on the congregation (or placed on each worshiper) to remind us of our baptism.



THE FIRST EUCHARIST OF EASTER

Bells ring! The worship room is decorated. All signs of Holy Week are removed. Lights are turned up as we sing the GLORIA. Then as Easter people who have passed with Christ from death to life, we meet our risen Lord in the eucharist. The TRIDUUM is ended... We have celebrated the mystery of the world's redemption...

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!