

Interim Rector's Corner

Holy Week

The week preceding Easter observed throughout catholic Christendom is a period of devotion to the Passion of Christ. The traditional rites associated with this week began to develop in the early Church with a vigil on the Saturday night before Resurrection Sunday. These liturgies became refined during the next few centuries and the Holy Week liturgies that we will celebrate at St. Martin's on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday in the Great Vigil of Easter are these very liturgies. There is an extraordinary witness of millions of Christians in our catholic traditions who have and continue to celebrate these last scenes in the earthly life of Christ. Will you join in that witness?

Palm branches, singing and procession initiate this most holy time of the Christian liturgical year on Palm Sunday as we celebrate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem the Sunday before his death on the cross. The Sacred Triduum (Sacred Three Days) begins on Maundy Thursday. We remember the First Eucharist and Jesus' command to all of us to be persons of love, service and acceptance. At the conclusion of our worship we remove all traces of our Christian heritage from the sanctuary and strip the altar. This dramatic symbol reminds us that Christ was stripped and beaten for our sakes. The stark look of the focus of our worship is also stripped bare.

On Good Friday we remember the Church throughout the world, hear the Passion of Christ according to St. John and Venerate the Cross, no longer a symbol of suffering – now a symbol of Christ's victory. Clergy in all catholic traditions are forbidden to celebrate Holy Eucharist on Good Friday. At St. Martin's we will not have Communion distributed from Reserved Sacrament. This one day of the Christian year we abstain from taking the Body and Blood of our Lord into ourselves and we mourn along with the mother of Jesus and his disciples. What those early disciples did not know, we know! At the Great Vigil (also known as the Paschal Vigil) we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the Principal Celebration of Easter! Unfortunately, in many Christian traditions, including ours the significance and meaning of this powerful celebration was lost for a long time. It has been revived and we will celebrate it at St. Martin's for the first time in several years. The celebration of the Great Vigil is called the principal celebration of Easter because it re-enacts in liturgical drama Christ as the new light, reminds us of our long journey through Salvation History as we remember our commitment to Christ in our personal spiritual death and resurrection in Baptism. Our worship concludes with Holy Communion in a moving liturgy. Christians who gather for the Great Vigil come away refreshed and renewed! Next week we will explore the Great Vigil more deeply.

Please make every attempt to avail yourselves of these liturgies this coming week. These gatherings can be deeply meaningful to each of us as we end our Lenten journey to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus, our Lord!

Fr. Al Jewson