



The Episcopal Church of St. John the Baptist
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The Rev. Thomas M. White

Holy Week and Easter 2018

Dear Member or Friend of the Episcopal Church of St. John the Baptist Family,

We are at the threshold of unfolding events which form the core of our Christian faith, the drama of Holy Week and Easter. No week in the Church year is more critically important to Christian faith and life than the one that begins this Sunday. Jesus' birth, the magi's visit, his baptism, miracles, healings, teaching and preaching all culminate in, and are validated by, what we trace and commemorate in the coming week.

The holiest of weeks begins Palm Sunday, when crowds proclaim Jesus king, and spread their garments and branches of palm in his path as he triumphantly enters Jerusalem. The triumph, glory, and joy are short-lived, though, as the religious and political powers begin plotting to eliminate this rabbi they deem an insurrectionist and heretic. The "Hosannas!" of the fickle crowd rapidly become demands of "Crucify him!" The night of his betrayal and arrest, Maundy Thursday, Jesus gathers with his beloved disciples, commanding that they love one another, and demonstrating his unsurpassed love for them by humbly washing their feet. The Last Supper Jesus instituted that night comes down through the centuries to us, celebrated still as God's love and forgiveness incarnated, and made real, as real as food and drink, in bread and wine. The ancient title for Good Friday is the Triumph of the Cross, reminding us that the tree of shame, in the power of God, becomes the tree of life. The culmination, climax, and crescendo of the holiest of weeks is contained in three words: "Christ is Risen!" Here is God's Good News that transforms us and our lives forevermore!

I pray and hope that you will make a focused effort to attend all the Holy Week and Easter Services, for they tell the story of what God in God's beloved Son has done to save us through unfathomable and unimaginable love. Would it make sense to read a best-selling novel and skip many of the chapters? Or who goes to a three-act play for only the last act? We should do no less with the story and drama of our redemption. And know this: as we walk with Jesus from Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, to the Upper Room, then to Golgotha and his cross, and finally to Easter's empty tomb and resurrection, we will discover anew that Jesus is at our side, walking with us through this life. The places and events of Holy Week are too essential to miss, even one!

The Holy Week and Easter schedule is as follows:

March 25: † Palm Sunday Mass—Procession of Palms from the parish hall and the reading of Christ's passion, 10 a.m.

- March 29: † Maundy Thursday Mass—Deacon Harry Hiltner preaching,
Stripping of the Altar, Procession of the Reserved Sacrament, 7 p.m.
- March 30: † Good Friday
Stations of the Cross, 12 noon
The Liturgy of Good Friday with Holy Eucharist from the
Reserved Sacrament, 7 p.m.
- April 1: † Easter Day
Festival Mass of the Resurrection of Our Lord, 10 a.m.
Easter egg hunt for the Sunday School—bring your friends!
Gathering for fellowship and refreshment after Mass

I invited you during Lent's forty days to put aside money you saved by what you might have given up for Lent as a thank offering on Easter Sunday. Even if you didn't give up something for Lent, you can still offer a gift. Place your offering in an envelope marked "Lenten Offering." The monetary gifts received will be divided equally between St. John the Baptist's outreach programs and Episcopal Relief and Development, both of which do amazing deeds of charity for the needy. Please give sacrificially.

Let me take this opportunity to tell you how happy I would be to visit you in your home, for no other reason than for you and me to get to know one another better. I welcome such visitations, but only need to hear of your desire.

My heartfelt wish to you and yours for a gloriously wonderful Easter! May its inexpressible joy, its living hope, its undying love, and its everlasting promise refresh, renew and transform all your days! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! May our lives be an unending "Alleluia!"

Resurrection blessings,
Fr. Tom