



Holy Week and Easter 2020

A Simple Liturgy  
With Readings And Reflections

## Introduction

What's does Holy Week mean for us? Why should we go to all the bother of marking it and taking the trouble to keep it?

Holy Week enables us to cross a threshold that takes us into the heart of the Christian story, leading us to embark on a journey in fellowship with others, retrieving fresh meaning from what is called the Paschal Mystery or Christ's 'passing over' from death to new life.

Holy Week is like a pilgrimage. A faith journey that leads inwards and outwards. Inwards as we encounter fresh meaning from Christ's passion; outwards as we seek fresh ways to live his risen life.

Normally this shared journey would begin on Palm Sunday and consolidate in darkness on Easter Eve, or before dawn on Easter morning when Christian communities gather together to: keep vigil; kindle the flame of the Easter fire; proclaim the Exsultet - that ancient Easter Song of Praise; before reaffirming baptismal promises and celebrating what it means to be an *Easter People* as followers of the *Way*. But this year, because of social distancing, that will not be possible. This year our Holy Week journey becomes more atomised, limited to a virtual sharing of our Easter faith from the confines of our homes. This leaflet offers a small resource to help facilitate a greater sense of solidarity. On pages 3-4 you will find a simple liturgy to use each day throughout Holy Week and to incorporate a daily reading and reflection. I hope you find this to be a helpful pattern to follow.

## Stages along the Way

Before we set off on this Holy Week Journey let's try to keep before us three primary questions. What is this journey for? Why is it important? How should I respond? Each weekday reflection begins with a statement posing a biblical question or text.

### **Monday**

Following: *'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?'*

### **Tuesday**

Trust: *'How can we know the Way?'*

### **Wednesday**

Belief: *'What must we do to perform the works of God?'*

### **Thursday**

Love: *'Do you know what I have done to you?'*

### **Friday**

Betrayal: *'You aren't one of this man's disciples too are you?'*

### **Saturday**

Loss: *'Joseph of Arimathea asks Pilate for the body of Jesus'.*

### **Sunday**

Rabbouni!: *'Whom are you looking for?'*

# A Simple Liturgy

## Opening sentences

*(Taken from Morning Prayer from Northumbria Community's Celtic Daily Prayer published by Collins.)*

One thing I have asked of the Lord,  
this is what I seek:  
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord  
all the days of my life;  
to behold the beauty of the Lord  
and to seek Him in His temple.

Who is it that you seek?  
We seek the Lord our God.

Do you seek Him with all your heart?  
Amen. Lord, have mercy.  
Do you seek Him with all your soul?  
Amen. Lord, have mercy.  
Do you seek Him with all your mind?  
Amen. Lord, have mercy.  
Do you seek Him with all your strength?  
Amen. Christ, have mercy.

## Reading and Reflection

*Read the bible passage for today slowly followed by the reflection for the day.*

## Silence

*Take time to be still ...*

## Taize Chant

Bless the Lord, my soul  
And bless God's holy name  
Bless the Lord, my soul  
Who leads me into life (Repeat ...)

*A short time of stillness follows the chant*

## Prayers

Lord of Life, we are pilgrims on a journey.  
You call us to look beyond the cross to your risen life.  
This Holy Week - open our ears to hear what you are saying to us in the world  
around us and through the actions we take.  
Open our eyes - to see the needs of others close by  
and in distant places.  
Open our hands - to acts of service, to help when help is needed.

Open our lips - to tell others the good news of your risen glory.  
Open our minds - to discover your truth in the world.  
Open our hearts - to love you as you have loved us ...

Lord in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer**

*Include here any particular biddings especially current developments with Covid-19*

## **Abba Prayer**

Abba, our Father ...  
Beloved, our God,  
Creator of all:  
your name be held holy,  
your blessing be upon us,  
your wisdom be our guide,  
your way be our path,  
your will be done well,  
at all times, in all places,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us the bread  
we need for today,  
the manna of your promise,  
the taste of your tomorrow.  
As we release those  
indebted to us,  
so forgive us our debts,  
our trespass on others.

Fill us with courage  
in time of our testing.  
Spare us from trials  
too severe to endure.  
Free us from the grip  
of the powers that bind.  
For yours is the goodness  
in which evil dissolves;  
yours is the joy  
that sounds through the pain;  
yours is the life  
which swallows up death.  
Yours is the glory,  
the transfiguring light,  
the victory of love,  
for time and eternity,  
for age after age.  
So be it. Amen.

## **Pilgrimage Prayer**

Loving God, draw us on our journey to the places of holiness,  
the places of peace, the places of fellowship,  
the places of encounter, the places of beauty,  
the places where faith has been lived,  
your love made known, your hope held out in the past,  
for the present, into your future. Amen.

May the life-giving cross  
be the source of all our joy and peace. Amen  
Let us bless the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## Palm Sunday

### Antiphon

**Hosanna to the Son of David.**

**Blessed is who comes in the name of the Lord.**

Behold your king comes to you O Zion,

Meek and lowly, sitting upon an ass.

Ride on in the cause of truth

And for the sake of justice.

Your throne is the throne of God, it endures for ever;

And the sceptre of your kingdom is a righteous sceptre.

You have loved righteousness and hated evil.

Therefore God, your God has anointed you

With the oil of gladness above your fellows.

**Hosanna to the Son of David**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**

### Reflection

It is with this refrain that our Holy Week pilgrimage begins. The narrative is of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem where pilgrims were assembling to keep the annual festival of Passover. Passover continues as a principal feast in the Jewish calendar reminding the faithful of the events of the Exodus. This ancient story becomes the 'big story' of the Old Testament. It tells how their ancestors were delivered and saved from an oppressive regime in Egypt. How blood from a sacrificial lamb was used to mark the doorposts of their homes. This would be a sign so that the angel of death could pass over without causing harm to the Hebrew people. Jews call the Passover festival by its Hebrew name, Pesach.

Easter becomes the big story of the New Testament. It also encompasses a story of salvation - but one that is more inclusive. Embedded within the grain of the story is the wood of the cross. An emblem tainted by the stains of human suffering and cruelty. Yet, through the deep sighing of the paschal mystery something truly wondrous, unexpected and utterly profound is accomplished. It is this that we seek to find afresh as we set off on our journey through Holy Week .

### To think about

What is it that I seek? Who is it that I seek? How am I to prepare for this journey, this encounter?

### Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

You humbled yourself in taking the form of a servant  
and in obedience died on the cross for our salvation:

give us the mind to follow you

and to proclaim you as Lord and King,

to the glory of God the Father. Amen



## Monday

Following: *'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?'*

### Reading John 1:43-46

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

### Reflection

The call of the first disciples is described differently in John's gospel. There's no lakeside scene and no reference to fishermen plying their trade as described by the other evangelists. Instead the fourth gospel places the events of their call in Bethany near the Jordan where John the Baptist was baptising. The scene suggests a time of heightened expectation, of expectant hope, waiting on God's kingdom.

John the Baptist testifies to Jesus being the Lamb of God and God's Chosen One. Two of John's followers then go off in search of Jesus to discover this for themselves. Having spent time in his company, Andrew is quick to fetch his brother, Simon, whom Jesus renames Kephias or Petros, Peter - the rock.

Jesus meanwhile is setting out for Galilee when he calls Philip to join them and Philip in turn goes off in search of Nathaniel expressing the belief they had found the Messiah, the one whom scripture claimed would bring in God's kingdom of righteousness, peace and justice. There were many different interpretations about the nature of the Messiah but, that he should emerge incognito from a small, obscure town like Nazareth, seemed implausible to Nathaniel. To which Philip retorts 'come and see'.

What comes over in this particular description of the disciples' call in the fourth gospel is a certain energy, a *pro-active* and not simply *reactive* response by the first disciples that suggests an expectant hope of God's kingdom breaking in at that present moment.

### To think about

This present moment is offering us a fresh opportunity to 'come and see' what God's kingdom of righteousness, peace and justice might look like. How might we become more pro-active in our understanding of discipleship? Spend some time thinking about what energised Andrew, Peter, Philip and Nathaniel as we continue this journey to Easter and beyond ...

### Prayer

*(St Benedict 480-543)*

Gracious God,  
give us the wisdom to perceive you,  
intellect to understand you,  
diligence to seek you,  
patience to wait for you,  
eyes to behold you,  
a heart to meditate upon you  
and life to proclaim you,  
through the power of the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

Tuesday

Trust: *'How can we know the way?'*

**Reading** John 14 4-9

"And you know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

**Reflection**

From a positive energy at the beginning of their discipleship, emotions change later on as Jesus foretells the need for their parting in order for him to be glorified. He encourages them not to be afraid but to show their solidarity with him and one another through acts of love. "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples". They are to trust that their solidarity would lead ultimately to a fuller understanding of what he was promising beyond their immediate cognitive understanding.

It's Thomas who seeks further assurance about where Jesus is going and how the disciples are expected to know the way. To which Jesus describes himself as being the *way* to the Father. But Thomas presses still further "show us the Father and we ask no more". Yet this urgency to have a full vision of the Father indicates how little has been grasped of what Jesus has revealed about himself. For in him, Thomas and the others had seen and known as much as a person is capable of seeing and knowing God in this world.

**To think about**

What we are meant to notice here is this reference to being in solidarity with Jesus' way, in pursuing a journey of sacrificial love; his truth, disrupting the darkness of this world; his life, incorporating God's future into a present context. We are also expected to heed his radical command to love one another, which becomes the title deeds to God's kingdom and pattern of the Christian journey. Let us spend a moment also to think what it means to trust, despite what we might fear as we progress on our journey.

**Prayer**

*(Walter Raleigh 1554-1618)*

Give me my scallop shell of quiet,  
my staff of faith to walk upon;  
my scrip of joy, immortal diet;  
my bottle of salvation;  
my gown of glory (hope's true gage);  
and thus I'll make my pilgrimage.

Wednesday

Belief: *'What must we do to perform the works of God?'*

**Reading** John 6: 28-33

Then they said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." So they said to him, "What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Then Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

**Reflection**

This passage follows from one of the miracle stories of Jesus feeding the crowd from five small barley loaves and two small fish. This passage is also about being fed, though not with perishable food but with food that sustains a different type of appetite. Picking up something of what's inferred by Jesus, the crowd ask: "what must we do to perform the works of God?". The direct answer means them believing in Jesus. Yet they are keen for a sign, one they could compare with the ancient story of their forbears, harking back to Moses and the Israelites being fed with manna from heaven when they hungered in the wilderness. However, Jesus will not be drawn into such a comparison. Those that were fed - even by miraculous means - knew hunger again. Whereas Jesus sought to address a different type of hunger and open a rich seam of spiritual value to enrich a person's life and sustain them amid life's darkest moments and most difficult trials. What was required? Believing in the one whom God had sent and trusting in his capacity to love them into the kingdom.

**To think about**

We are quickly discovering what it means to live through a global pandemic. Alongside statistics and grave predictions, the many personal stories of sorrow and loss, to be reminded also of the daily acts of courage and the dedicated fight to eradicate the disease. What is required of us as Christians is to pray: for courage and calm, patience and strength, ingenuity and resourcefulness, the curbing of selfishness and greed, for healing of the sick, for peace for the dying and consolation for the bereaved.

**Prayer**

*(Augustine of Hippo, 354 - 430)*

Watch dear Lord with those who wake, or watch, or weep tonight, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend your sick ones, rest your weary ones. Bless your dying ones. Soothe your suffering ones. Pity your afflicted ones. Shield your joyous ones. And all for your love's sake. Amen



## Thursday

Love: *'Do you know what I have done to you?'*

### **Reading** John 13: 12-15

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

### **Reflection**

There is a model of humility captured in this act of foot washing. Jesus, as he nears his Passion, gets down on his knees to complete a task of the lowliest kind and one that subverts convention. Yet more than simply modelling humility what can be observed is a supreme gesture of love. One that intends to move the relationship between Master and Disciple to one of profound friendship. Indeed a little further on in the gospel we hear this explained more fully. "I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from the Father" (Ch15:15).

There is another layer of significance that is sometimes attributed to this act of foot washing, that of baptism. In the opening chapter of the fourth gospel the evangelist explains that John the Baptist was baptising in the Jordan, that it was John the Baptist who perceived God's Chosen One as one who would baptise with the Holy Spirit. Now, as the gospel narrative moves towards its climax, the evangelist includes a whole discourse with Jesus encouraging his disciples that he will not leave them comfortless and promising the gift of the Holy Spirit (ch14), all of which is prefaced by this demonstrative act of washing his disciples feet. And, when questioned by Simon Peter, Jesus' response is emphatic: "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me". It marks a key moment when the twelve are to experience a deep and profound unity with their master.

### **To think about**

Like foot washing for the disciples, baptism marks a ritualistic moment to endorse that self same unity of faith. Baptism speaks to us of being born again of water and the Spirit. Like Simon Peter, there is much that won't be fully understood. What one can begin to grasp is the washing; of being made clean; of sharing in a fellowship of faith; of being clothed with Christ; and of being gifted the Holy Spirit to step out into the world to live faithful lives.

### **Prayer**

*(Part of St Patrick's Breastplate)*

Christ be with me, Christ within me,  
Christ behind me, Christ before me,  
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,  
Christ to comfort and restore me.  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,  
Christ in hearts of all that love me,  
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

## Friday

Cost: *'You aren't one of this man's disciples too are you?'*

### **Reading** John 18: 18 and 25b-27.

Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing around it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself. They asked him, "You are not also one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.

### **Reflection**

Events quickly overtake the intimacy of the last supper, with its hope-filled message. Stepping out into the night Judas consorts with those who would seek to arrest Jesus whilst later, in the garden of Gethsemane after a brief foray, each of the disciples abandon their Master. We pick up the narrative at the high priest's courtyard where Jesus faces interrogation. Simon Peter and another disciple have gained access to the courtyard. Left alone Peter is unable to remain incognito but is challenged repeatedly whether he was a disciple of Jesus. A charge he vehemently denies. At which point the cock crows reminding Peter of Jesus words that "before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times". Peter is no longer following, instead he is denying, betraying and deserting, walking away from his discipleship. The fourth evangelist says nothing of this yet the other evangelists do. Luke records how: "The Lord turned and looked at Peter" and that Peter wept bitterly. We may wonder what that look must have conveyed to Peter. Disappointment? Rebuke? Yet, if we have understood the narrative of the passion gospel so far it would suggest that it was the eye of love, not the eye of rebuke, or ridicule, that held Peter's gaze at that precise moment. For elsewhere Jesus makes the claim that he came into the world "not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me. And this is the will of the one who sent me that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day" (John 6:38-39). Not a single one was to be lost!

### **To think about**

Try as we may to live faithful lives we are confronted with how often we fall short of our own expectations of ourselves. Most of our failings don't weigh us down with deepest guilt or remorse though there may be situations when this will be the case. Despite our failings one truth that we should cling to is that in Christ the love of God is shown to be unshakable, dependable, and unconditional.

### **Prayer**

*(Iona Community - adapted)*

Before God, with the people of God,  
we confess to our brokenness:  
To the ways we wound our lives,  
the lives of others and the life of the world.  
May God forgive me, Christ renew me,  
and the spirit enable me to grow in love.  
Amen.

## Saturday

Loss: *'Joseph of Arimathea asks Pilate for the body of Jesus'*.

### Reading John 19: 38-end

After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

### Reflection

The body of Jesus is entombed. It is the eve of the Jewish Sabbath - all is still. It's a time of silent waiting. A silence we can share as we turn our minds to the enormity of what has happened. The terrifying agony of the crucifixion; the immense sense of confusion and loss at Jesus' death; the harsh reality of the tomb where his body was laid to rest.

In Bristol Cathedral there is a large Saxon stone dating back to the 11th century or earlier. It was discovered during an excavation of the Chapter House floor and is currently displayed on a pillar in the south transept. One theory is that it may have formed a decorative end panel to a burial casket. What makes this a compelling theory is that the carving on the stone depicts the harrowing of hell. It represents Christ descending to the place of the dead. The carving shows Christ holding aloft the victor's cross whilst with his free hand he clasps the hands of Adam and Eve lifting them out of their bondage, whilst the heel of his foot is placed firmly upon the devil's head. The harrowing of hell is a very evocative image to consider on Holy Saturday.

### To think about

Here are some verses from an ancient homily for Holy Saturday by an unknown author.  
*(Esther De Waal. (2009) Seeking Life, Canterbury Press, p13-20)*

What is happening?

Today there is a great silence over the earth,  
a great silence and stillness,  
a great silence because the King sleeps ...

He wishes to visit those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

He goes to free the prisoner Adam and his fellow-prisoner Eve from their pains,  
he who is God and Adam's son ... he raises them up saying:

"Awake O sleeper and arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light.

Come forth ... Have light ... Rise ... I command you: Awake, sleeper!

## **Prayer**

Visit this place, O Lord, we pray,  
and drive far from it the snares of the enemy;  
may your holy angels dwell with us and guard us in peace,  
and may your blessing be always upon us;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

## **Sunday**

Rabbouni!: *'Whom are you looking for?'*

### **Reading** John 20: 11-18

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

### **Reflection**

The discovery of the empty tomb before sunrise on that first Easter morning leaves Mary of Magdala distraught. Her immediate assumption was that someone had stolen the body of Jesus. She alerts the others who race back ahead of her to investigate.

If you were robbing a grave what would possess you to unwrap the grave cloths from the corpse and take the trouble to fold them neatly where the body had lain? That was the conundrum that faced the disciples that first Easter morning. Mystified the menfolk return home but Mary Magdalene lingered behind watching and weeping for her loss. What was it that transformed this negative experience of inconsolable grief to a heightened level of inexpressible joy?

We are entering now into the realm of the paschal mystery. A mystery that turns our thinking - and the thoughts of the first disciples - upside down. The account of what then happens begins with a voice asking: 'Whom are you looking for?'. All Mary wants at this moment is to lay Jesus' body to rest, to be able to honour his life, to mourn his death and to properly say goodbye. Through her tears she presses the stranger, whom she has mistaken for the gardener, to help her recover the body. Then comes that one word - a word that strikes an unmistakable chord in her heart. "Mary". At once she knows who it is addressing her. There can be no other! "Rabbouni!" Teacher! She says and from this moment of incredulity the Easter story unfolds.

## **To think about**

We shall always struggle to find ways to adequately speak about Easter and what it means for us to live Christ's risen life. We shall always feel out of our depth. But what is it that the risen Lord encourages his friends to do as he calls to them from the sea shore? Simply to "push out into the deep".

And that's where this Holy Week journey leads us. Back to the font where our Christian journey began. Back to reaffirm our baptismal faith renewed in the light of the Easter Story, steadying ourselves before pushing out into the deep.

What is this journey for? Why is it important? How should I respond? These are questions to dwell upon further as we go forward in faith and hope and love.

## **Prayer**

*(Verse 2 St Patrick's Breastplate, New English Hymnal)*

I bind this day to me for ever,  
By power of faith, Christ's incarnation;  
His baptism in Jordan river;  
His death on cross for my salvation;  
His bursting from the spiced tomb;  
His riding up the heavenly way;  
His coming at the day of doom;  
I bind unto myself this day.

