

Journey through Holy Week

5 - 12 April 2020

Sunday 5 April: Palm Sunday

Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey, hailed as the Messiah. We welcome him with palms, as people did on that first occasion, and are given a palm cross to remind us that we must take up our cross and follow Jesus. Donkeys have a cross marked on their backs: we too have a cross, indelibly marked on us at our Baptism. Like the donkey who carried Jesus invisibly to his birth in Bethlehem, we carry Jesus with us wherever we go. Sometimes we carry him publicly, as today's donkey did. Sometimes, like Balaam's ass (Book of Numbers chs 22-24) we are required to draw attention to God's will.



By the end of the week, the crowd had become hostile to Jesus.

Pray that we will be faithful to our cross as we follow Jesus through this week.

*Lord Christ, call us who long to love and serve you
along the way of your Cross;
set us free from all that holds us back
with the forgiveness of your Cross;
strengthen us to be faithful
with the power of your Cross;
and bring us at last to know
the glory of your Cross.
We ask this in your name.
Amen.*

Monday 6 April: The cleansing of the Temple

The Court of the Gentiles, the one place in the Temple where non-Jews who were interested in worshipping the God of the Jews could pray, was the site of all the trading that went on to ensure that Jews who wanted to offer sacrifice would be supplied both with the unblemished animals required, and money that could be used in the temple without importing coins bearing the head of the Roman Emperor. No doubt the hubbub was increased by the noisy protests of people who thought they were not getting a fair deal.



Jesus was angry: 'My house should be a house of prayer for all nations. You have made it a den of thieves,' he said, as he threw all the traders and money-changers out.

Sometimes the only right response is anger – it is what fuels reform.

Pray for the courage to challenge injustice in all its forms.

Tuesday 7 April: A day full of questions and arguments.

Questioning someone's authority is a good way to undermine their influence. The religious leaders were desperate to get rid of Jesus, so they came with trumped-up questions, some theological some political, to see if they could catch him out, hoping that he would overstep the mark and take to himself the authority that belongs to God, or incite rebellion against the ruling powers. If he did either, they would have grounds for saying he should be put to death. But Jesus turned all the questions back on the questioners, and avoided their traps.



Pray for wisdom and insight as we face hard questions about who Jesus is.

Wednesday 8 April: A day of rest.

On this day, Jesus didn't go into Jerusalem. Instead he spent it with friends in Bethany. The blessing of friendship was symbolised by the anointing he received.

Give thanks for the blessing of friendships, and pray for all who have no friends to support them.

Thursday 9 April: A day of love and betrayal.

Jesus gave his disciples an example of loving service when he washed their feet: his New Commandment was that his followers should give loving service to each other in the same way. He also gave us a way to remember him, in the bread and wine of Holy Communion. Such love and care for others, as the clouds gathered around him, and Judas went out into the darkness of betrayal.

At some point in the next few hours, Pilate also called for a bowl of water, and washed his hands of all responsibility. We are always faced with that choice: into which bowl will we dip our hands?



Pray for grace and courage always to choose the way of loving service.

Friday 10 April: The day of Crucifixion

We call it Good Friday. It didn't look like that to Jesus' family and friends. It looked as though everything Jesus stood for had been defeated. But the opposite is true. At the Cross, evil was stopped in its tracks. Jesus accepted the worst that humans could do to him, and by refusing to retaliate set us free from the power of sin. At what cost!

*'Love so amazing, so divine
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*



Pray for a deepening love for God, which can result in self-giving service of others.

Saturday: The Sabbath.

Apparently nothing much happened on this day. Because it was the Sabbath, none of the usual rites for the dead could be carried out, mourning was put on hold. It's hard to imagine the bleakness of that day for those first Christians, when we are busy preparing for tomorrow. But there is a tradition that Jesus was far from inactive, lying in the grave. He went through death to reach those who were trapped in the realms of the dead, to give them life, and cancel the power of death.



Pray for all who are entombed in terror, weighed down by despair, isolated by fear; for all who have no hope.

Sunday 12 April: Easter Day

*Rise, heart, Thy Lord is risen, sing His praise
Without delays,
Who takes thee by the hand, that thou likewise
With Him mayest rise.*

from The Temple (1633), by George Herbert

The Lord is risen,

he is risen indeed!

Alleluia!



*Text by Ann Lewin.
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