

Holy Week 2018

Holy Week a Quarter Century Later:

It was twenty-five years ago that I prepared for my first Holy Week at All Saints, Manhattan. I had never performed liturgy that was so Anglo-Catholic. I had never censed an altar, never sung a mass, never done Stations of the Cross. Like Alice, I was in Wonderland! I was told we have a finely tuned liturgy here and we don't need any changes. But try as we will, change is inevitable and inexorable. We move from life to death and from death to life.

Yes, the Church has changed, in some ways for better and in some ways not. But what strikes me is how much I have changed. Then I knew the gospel as it had been delivered to me. There was, no doubt, a certain liberal point of view. But as I get older I could more clearly hear the prophet Jeremiah's words that "I will create a new covenant, not one made of stone but one planted in your heart." What has come to me is that inner sense that Jesus had when he repeatedly stated in the Sermon on the Mount, "You have heard it said, but now I say to you . . ." something different. In the same way, those who heard him teach, said he taught as one with authority, not like the scribes. He spoke what he knew in the depths of his being.

This is not to claim that I have the same wisdom and authority as Jesus — far from it. What I am saying is that years and years of following the liturgy and reading the lessons, that a deeper internal sense of the meaning of things have made me trust in that inner "still small voice" of the God within. Yes, I can still be wrong, but now there are times when the Spirit speaks strongly and my main task is not to hinder that voice.

Sometimes the liturgies can seem too long and too remote, maybe too symbolic or obscure. But I do believe that the faithful exposure and attention to these externally practiced rituals allow for the slow process of having the deeper truths begin to work an alchemy in the soul that gradually transforms into having the compassionate mind of Christ. I believe Jesus "got it" very quickly and profoundly. I feel that some of it has trickled in through the faithful observance of the Word and Sacraments over the years.

This Holy Week, I am calling all of us to the faithful practice of the Church's most sacred liturgies that have us follow in the footsteps of Jesus during the most intense days of his life. The Greeks in last week's gospel from John said, "We want to see Jesus." I want to see him too and I also want to see the world and my life the way Jesus saw his world and his life.

For us mortals, it might take years to get a glimpse, but once that reality has been glimpsed, all else feels superfluous. Let's not give up on the breaking of the bread and fellowship of the faithful, for in so doing we participate in the slow but steady process of working out our salvation with fear and trembling, as we find ourselves gradually transformed by the renewal of our minds.

Please join us this year for our carefully prepared liturgies of Holy Week as described on the next page.

Peace,

The Rev. Steven J. Yagerman

Holy Week at a Glance:



Palm Sunday: March 25 at 10am. This Sunday serves as a foreshadowing of Holy Week. We move from the ecstatic welcoming of the crowds singing Hosanna and waving palms as Jesus enters Jerusalem, to the tragic rejection and execution of Jesus. Could it be that all of our lives begin with a joyful entry into the world only to subsequently experience rejection and mortality? Could it be that the resurrected life cannot begin until we go through this first death of our innocence and naiveté? All Saints Levy Choir School choristers will be joining us for this celebration.

Agapé Supper: Thursday, March 29 at 5:30. An informal meal celebrated around a communal table. Typically the meal includes middle eastern foods such as salads, pita bread, humus, olives, roast chicken. It would be great for

each person to contribute a dish of some kind. Please let the office know (212-758-0447) what you intend to bring, or check the sign up sheet at coffee hour on Palm Sunday. We will do the foot washing at this meal, to remind us of when Jesus washed his disciples' feet.

Maundy Thursday: March 29 at 7:30. This is a service rich in symbolism. It includes the veneration of the reserved sacrament in the chapel and concludes with the ceremonial stripping of the altar, as a sign of Jesus' being stripped of his dignity as he stands in solidarity with all victims of human violence throughout the millennia. We ask ourselves, "How do we participate in a culture of violence and scapegoating?"

Good Friday: March 30 at noon. In this service, again, rich in archetypal imagery, we stand at the foot of the cross and ask, in the words of the old spiritual, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" Here we experience the sobering poignancy at the core of our faith, i.e. God is not found in a pristine world beyond, but rather embedded deep in the midst of our human condition.

Easter Vigil: March 31 at 9pm. Taking our cue from the early church, as it ended a strict Lenten season, we celebrate the resurrection of Christ, beginning in the darkness before Easter morning. The Church, shrouded in darkness, is lit by the light of Christ, which is symbolically carried into the midst of the congregation atop the Paschal Candle. Speaking with symbol and sacrament we find a language deeper than words speaking about the apotheosis of humanity through the resurrection of the Christ. Can we manifest the power of this resurrection in our Church and in our lives?

Easter Morning: April 1 at 10am. Our normal festive celebration of Resurrection Sunday! Not a historical observance, but a celebration of signs of the resurrection in our lives. This is the central celebration of the entire year. If one has been through the discipline of Lent, then Easter serves as a sign that a new and different kind of life is available to be lived in the here and now. Can we think of a reason we wouldn't want to share in this new life? In facing our mortality and in solidarity with the scapegoat / victim, we enter the risen life of our Lord!