

Passiontide and Holy Week – Introduction to the Season

It is still uncertain when Christians first began to make an annual (as opposed to a weekly) memorial of the death and resurrection of Christ. This *Pascha* (a word derived indirectly from *pesach*, Hebrew ‘Passover’) was at first a night-long vigil, followed by the celebration of the Eucharist at cock-crow, and all the great themes of redemption were included within it: incarnation, suffering, death, resurrection, glorification. Over time, the *Pascha* developed into the articulated structure of Holy Week and Easter. Through participation in the whole sequence of services, the Christian shares in Christ’s own journey, from the triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to the empty tomb on Easter morning. The procession with palms, which was already observed in Jerusalem in the fourth century, is accompanied by the reading or singing of the Passion Narrative, in which the whole story of the week is anticipated. Maundy Thursday (from *mandatum*, ‘commandment’, because of the use of John 13.34 in the Antiphon) contains a rich complex of themes: humble Christian service expressed through Christ’s washing of his disciples’ feet, the institution of the Eucharist, the perfection of Christ’s loving obedience through the agony of Gethsemane.

After keeping vigil, Thursday passes into Good Friday with its two characteristic episodes. The veneration of the Cross is older; the sequence of meditations and music known as the Three Hours’ Devotion was introduced into the Church of England in the nineteenth century. The first is now sometimes incorporated into the structure of the second. It is a widespread custom for there not to be a celebration of the Eucharist on Good Friday, but for the consecrated bread and wine remaining from Maundy Thursday to be given in communion. The church remains stripped of all decoration. It continues bare and empty through the following day, which is without liturgy: there can be no adequate way of recalling the being dead of the Son of God, other than silence. But within it there grows a sense of anticipation and completion, as Easter draws near.

This solemn season preserves some of the oldest texts still in current use, and rehearses the deepest and most fundamental Christian memories. At the same time, the services and ceremonies of Holy Week have in the course of Christian history been the occasion of, or have actively encouraged, hostility towards the Jews. The ‘*Ioudaioi*’ of St John’s Gospel have all too easily been identified with ‘the Jews’ as a whole, or more specifically those Jews who were neighbours of a Christian church. This places a double responsibility on those who lead the keeping of Holy Week today: to be faithful to the act of collective memory, but also to be sensitive to the ways in which an unreflecting use of traditional texts (like the Reproaches) can perpetuate a strain of Christian anti-Semitism.

THE ORDER OF THE EUCHARIST

¶ THE GATHERING

Opening Sentence

President: Hosanna to the Son of David, the King of Israel. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

The Greeting

President: ✠ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

President: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Introduction

The people hold their palm crosses while this prayer of blessing is said by the president.

President: God our Saviour,
whose Son Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem as Messiah to suffer and to die;
bless these palms and let them be for us signs of victory
and grant that we who bear them in his name
may hail him as our King,
and follow him in the way that leads to eternal life;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All: Amen.

The Palm Gospel - Luke 19.28–40

President: Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

President: Jesus went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, "Why are you untying it?" just say this, "The Lord needs it.'" So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, 'Why are you untying the colt?' They said, 'The Lord needs it.' Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying, 'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!' Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, order your disciples to stop.' He answered, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.'

President: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, O Christ.

The Procession

President: Let us go forth, praising Jesus our Messiah.

During the procession all hold up palms and sing.

Processional Hymn

*All glory, laud and honour
To thee, Redeemer King,
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring.*

2

THOU art the King of Israel,
Thou David's royal Son,
Who in the Lord's name comest,
The King and blessed One.

3

The company of angels
Are praising thee on high,
And mortal men and all things
Created make reply.

4

The people of the Hebrews
With palms before thee went;
Our praise and prayer and anthems
Before thee we present.

5

To thee before thy passion
They sang their hymns of praise;
To thee, now high exalted,
Our melody we raise.

6

Thou didst accept their praises,
Accept the prayers we bring,
Who in all good delightest,
Thou good and gracious King.

7

Do thou direct our footsteps
Upon our earthly way,
And bring us by thy mercy
To heaven's eternal day.

8

Within that blessed City
Thy praises may we sing,
And ever raise hosannas
To our most loving King.

J M Neale NEH 509

The Collect - *Remain standing*

President: Let us pray for a closer union with Christ in his suffering and in his glory.
A brief moment of stillness is kept.

Almighty and everlasting God,
who in your tender love towards the human race
sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ
to take upon him our flesh
and to suffer death upon the cross:
grant that we may follow the example
of his patience and humility,
and also be made partakers of his resurrection;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All: Amen.

¶ THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gospel Acclamation - *If you are able, remain standing for the gospel.*

President: Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory!

All: Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory!

President: Christ humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.
Therefore God has highly exalted him and given him the name that is above every name.

All: Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory!

The Passion Reading - *At 'he breathed his last' there is a pause in prayer during which you are invited to bow or genuflect.*

President: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

President: Hear the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

President: This is the Passion of the Lord.

No response is made and silence is kept.

Sermon - *Sit*

A short period for reflection follows.

¶ THE LITURGY OF THE SACRAMENT

The Peace

President: Once we were far off,
but now in union with Christ Jesus we have been brought near
through the shedding of Christ's blood,
for he is our peace.

All: The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

Offertory Hymn - Stand

4

WHEN I survey the wondrous Cross,
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

2

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
Save in the death of Christ my God;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to his blood.

3

See from his head, his hands, his feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

His dying crimson like a robe,
Spreads o'er his body on the Tree;
Then am I dead to all the globe,
And all the globe is dead to me.

5

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Isaac Watts NEH 95

Prayer at the Preparation of the Table - *Remain standing*

President: Let us pray.
Jesus, true vine and bread of life,
ever giving yourself that the world might live,
let us share your death and passion:
make us perfect in your love.

All: Amen.

The Eucharistic Prayer

President The Lord be with you
All and also with you.

President Lift up your hearts.
All We lift them to the Lord.

President Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
All It is right to give thanks and praise.

The president praises God for his mighty acts and all respond.

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

The president recalls the Last Supper and calls upon the Holy Spirit.

President: Great is the mystery of faith:

**All: Christ has died:
Christ is risen:
Christ will come again.**

The president concludes the prayer.

All: Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

President: Rejoicing in the presence of God here among us,
let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

**All: Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth,
as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

President: We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All: Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

**All: Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: grant us peace.**

Giving of Communion

President: Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sin of the world.
Blessed are those who are called to his supper.

**All: Lord, I am not worthy to receive you,
but only say the word, and I shall be healed.**

Holy Communion is distributed from the chancel step. All who are baptised and ordinarily receive Holy Communion in their own church are welcome to receive here. Alternatively you are invited to come forward for a blessing.

Hymn during Communion

5

MY song is love unknown,
my Saviour's love to me,
love to the loveless shown,
that they might lovely be.
O who am I, that for my sake,
my Lord should take, frail flesh and die?

2

He came from his blest throne
salvation to bestow,
but men made strange, and none
the longed-for Christ would know.
But O my friend, my friend indeed,
who at my need, his life did spend!

3

Sometimes they strew his way,
and his sweet praises sing;
resounding all the day
hosannas to their King;
then 'Crucify!' is all their breath,
and for his death they thirst and cry.

4

Why, what hath my Lord done?
What makes this rage and spite?
He made the lame to run,
he gave the blind their sight.
Sweet injuries! Yet they at these
themselves displease, and 'gainst him rise.

They rise, and needs will have
my dear Lord made away;
a murderer they save,
the Prince of Life they slay.
Yet cheerful he to suffering goes,
that he his foes from thence might free.

6

In life, no house, no home
my Lord on earth might have:
in death no friendly tomb
but what a stranger gave.
What might I say? Heaven was his home;
but mine the tomb wherein he lay.

7

Here might I stay and sing,
no story so divine:
never was love, dear King,
never was grief like thine.
This is my friend, in whose sweet praise
I all my days could gladly spend.

After communion a period for reflection is kept. After this all stand with the President.

Prayer after Communion - Stand

President: 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.

All: Amen.

Notices - Sit

The Blessing - Stand

President: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

President: May the Father,
who so loved the world that he gave his only Son,
bring you by faith to his eternal life.

All: Amen.

President: May Christ,
who accepted the cup of sacrifice
in obedience to the Father's will,
keep you steadfast as you walk with him the way of his cross.

All: Amen.

President: May the Spirit,
who strengthens us to suffer with Christ,
that we may share his glory,
set your minds on life and peace.

All: Amen.

President: and the blessing of God Almighty,
✠ the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
be among you and remain with you always.

All: Amen.

Dismissal

President: Go in the peace of Christ.

All: Thanks be to God.

Recessional Hymn - Stand

CROWN him with many crowns,
The Lamb upon his throne;
Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns
All music but its own:
Awake, my soul, and sing
Of him who died for thee,
And hail him as thy matchless King
Through all eternity.

2

Crown him the Virgin's Son,
The God incarnate born,
Whose arm those crimson trophies won
Which now his brow adorn:
Fruit of the mystic Rose,
As of that Rose the Stem;
The Root whence mercy every flows,
The Babe of Bethlehem.

3

Crown him the Lord of love!
Behold his hands and side,
Rich wounds yet visible above
In beauty glorified:
No angel in the sky
Can fully bear that sight,
But downward bends his burning eye
At mysteries so bright.

4

Crown him the Lord of peace,
Whose power a sceptre sways
From pole to pole, that wars may cease,
Absorbed in prayer and praise:
His reign shall know no end,
And round his pierced feet;
Fair flowers of Paradise extend
Their fragrance ever sweet.

5

Crown him the Lord of years,
The Potentate of time,
Creator of the rolling spheres,
Ineffably sublime.
Glassed in a sea of light,
Where everlasting waves
Reflect his throne - the Infinite!
Who lives - and loves - and saves.

Matthew Bridges NEH 352, Diademata



Entry into Jerusalem, Giotto, 14th century