

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER 2018

The Lord is risen indeed;
thanks be to God who gives us the victory
through our Lord Jesus Christ!
1 Corinthians 15:57

Mothing Sunday,
March 11, 2018

Dear Friends in Christ,

The great festivals of victory and new life, which we have in Jesus Christ, are very soon upon us. As we celebrate the days of Holy Week, we have the privilege of re-entering the crucial events of our hope and salvation. We *re-present* the very moments and acts which have given new life to all those who trust and believe in Christ; and while the arrest, trial, crucifixion, and death of Jesus happened long ago, we intend once again to enter into the story of His Passion that we might again hear the wonderful news of a love which is endless and overwhelming.

The need for us to hear the good news of hope and love never goes away. Human life is never entirely free of the chaos and disorder, the sorrow and pain, the anger and disappointment that threatens all of us from time to time. In all of the uncertainty that seems to mark this world, the knowledge that God is present even in our darkest hours, and that His Grace is freely offered to all of us, is the one thing that has the power to restore a measure of dignity and joy in our lives.

As always, here at St. Mary's, we offer a very intense time of praise and worship throughout Holy Week. Beginning with the services on **Palm Sunday**, which recall Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, when the people joyfully received Him as King, laying down palm branches on the road as He passed by, we continue with services on each and every day of Holy Week.



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The celebrations on **Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday** are quiet, reflective services, where we listen to and think about the Gospel stories of Christ's suffering and death.



On **Maundy Thursday** we share in a touching act of service and love as we wash each other's hands, in imitation of Jesus, who in love and service washed the feet of His disciples. We also commemorate the institution of the Last Supper, an occasion of solemn joy; but our service ends with quiet disorder as the altar is striped and left bare, recalling our Lord's surrender of His life to the Will of the Father as He prayed in the garden.

Following where we leave off the evening before, **Good Friday** sees the most solemn and sombre services of the entire week, and perhaps the entire year, as we witness the death of the Son of God on the Cross and reflect on what that says to each of us in our moments of fear and abandonment.



And as those services draw to a close, we await the still, quiet, darkness of Easter Even, or **Holy Saturday**, when we gather to see the lighting of the New Fire, the new fire of hope and life, as it is rekindled, and hear again the promises that God made to rescue and save His People.

The schedule that you will find enclosed with this letter will help you to mark out the times you need to set aside to share in this glorious week. I hope that you will take advantage of the tremendous opportunity which this week offers, an opportunity to participate in the events which have changed humanity forever. Some will try to attend each day; others will try to worship as part of Christ's Family on as many occasions as possible. But I would add that the greater the effort made, the greater the benefit that you will enjoy. And, as always, it doesn't matter whether you already worship with us on a regular basis or haven't done so for some time. We welcome all to join us, in Christ's Name. Please try to come out as we hear again the great news of death conquered and humanity redeemed.

I wish all of you a holy Passiontide and a happy Easter,

Fr. Kevin M. Stockall,
Priest and Rector