

## A Field Guide for Holy Week & Easter

### Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup> (10 AM Livestreamed)

#### **8 and 10 AM Palm Sunday: Holy Week begins (Essential)**

This service recalls Jesus entering into Jerusalem in an ironically joyous parade. We bless and bear palm branches, immersing ourselves in the painful truth that Christ can be hailed King and yet turned against and abandoned in the same week. After his “arrival in Jerusalem”, we hear the Passion Gospel and participate directly in the story. The service culminates in the Holy Eucharist, being strengthened for the journey ahead with mystical food. This will be the last Eucharist until Maundy Thursday, when the *Holy Triduum* (or Sacred Three Days) begins.

+ + +

#### **The *Triduum* - the Sacred Three Days**

These three days form one great liturgy of mystery, the Paschal Mystery, as there is no dismissal from the start of the Maundy Thursday liturgy through the end of the Great Vigil of Easter on Saturday night. Many people fast all or part of this time (especially for Good Friday). Each day expresses a part of the Mystery and all should be experienced as a unity just as the seamless garment Christ wore shows us

that his teaching and life are one, integral, whole offering of Love and Truth. Participation in the *Triduum* is a crucial part of our commitment to follow Jesus where he leads us as individuals and as a body. If you did not grow up observing Holy Week and Easter this way, you are invited to immerse yourself to the highest degree possible in this way of experiencing the Paschal Mystery as we celebrate together.

+ + +

### Thursday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> (Livestreamed)

#### **7 PM: Maundy Thursday Liturgy (Essential)**

This service starts much as the Lenten services do, but then moves to focus on the two great commandments (or mandates) Christ gave us on this night: 1. to love each other as he loves us, and 2. to share in his presence through the sacred mysteries of his Body and Blood. So, on this night the rite of foot-washing is offered—by which we see that humble service is essential in the Christian life—and the Eucharist is celebrated on the anniversary of its inauguration at the Last Supper. After this, the Holy Sacrament reserved for Good Friday (7 PM) is taken to the Altar of Repose at the side altar of the Chancel. The main altar is stripped while one of the Psalms of the Passion is said, recalling Christ’s betrayal, arrest, and humiliation. The lights are lowered and we leave in silence.

### **8 PM: Garden Watch (until Midnight - Essential)**

The four-hour *Garden Watch* is then held at the side altar of the Chancel from the end of the Maundy Thursday liturgy until Midnight, with parishioners taking one hour shifts to pray with Christ in the Holy Sacrament at the Altar of Repose, recalling his words to his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane: “Could you not watch with me for one hour?” This is a particularly holy and blessed opportunity to stretch ourselves spiritually and physically for the sake of our God.

### **Friday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> (7 PM Livestreamed)**

#### **Noon and 7 PM: Good Friday Liturgy (Essential)**

The liturgy resumes in silence as we kneel in humility before God who has loved us so much as to allow his Son to take on our ancient enemies—Sin and Death—in personal combat, and to overcome them in Love Divine. The Passion Gospel according to St. John is then read, and a sermon preached. Following this, the assembly begins the Solemn Collects, taking our part as a priestly people before God, interceding on behalf of the world with our God who has redeemed it, and showing forth the true power and significance of what Christ has done on the Cross and continues to do through the Church and its members in intercession and action. Then a rugged Cross is brought before the people and venerated by all those desiring to do so while hymns are sung. This can take a while and is often deeply personal—yet also profoundly communal. Finally (at the 7 PM liturgy only), the Reserved Sacrament is brought from the side altar and the remaining elements from Maundy Thursday’s Holy Communion are shared as a sign of Christ’s working and presence—even in death—for us, and as an affirmation that this is indeed “Good” Friday, where life has the final word. After all the elements are consumed, we leave again in silence.

### **Saturday, April 4<sup>th</sup> (Day)**

#### **10 AM: Holy Saturday “Tomb” Liturgy (not essential, but powerful in its simplicity)**

This simple service continues in silence, then moves to an account of Christ’s burial. A sermon on Christ’s decent into Hades (or Hell) is shared and prayers from the Burial Liturgy are read. An extraordinary peace and quiet pervade this liturgy.

## Saturday, April 4<sup>th</sup> (Night - Livestreamed)

### **8 PM: The Great Vigil of Easter (Essential)**

The Great Vigil of Easter is the most joyful and blessed moment of the Church Year; it opens the Royal Doors to the central fact of the Christian Faith, that Christ is risen from the dead, and through baptism we may rise with him.

*The Vigil is long; it is meant to be.* We are waiting on God, joining with the Holy Women who came to Christ's tomb in devotion and service. We wait in darkness; the church is like a tomb. Beginning on the Labyrinth outside where at Mardi Gras we burned the dead palms from last year to make ashes as a sign of our mortality, a New Fire, the Paschal Fire is struck--light in the dark. From it, the Paschal Candle--harbinger of the Resurrection--is lit, processed, and blessed in a very ancient praise-prayer: the *Exsultet*. Then come the readings from the ancient Old Testament, telling the story of God's loving and saving work from the beginning through the Prophets. A sermon is preached and then our hand-candles are lit and we are bidden to stand.

It is now that Lent is declared over and Holy Baptism is celebrated and our baptismal vows renewed. When there are baptisms, the candidates (or their sponsors, if infants) make their baptismal promises in front of the congregation. The baptismal waters are blessed in a massive chanted prayer accompanied by many ancient ritual actions and all gather as close as possible. Candles burn brightly and the room is hushed; it is a unique moment of intentionality as we await birth.

The new Christians are made by joining their Lord through the waters of the Font, dying and rising again with Christ. After the newly-baptized are anointed, receive their baptismal candles, and are introduced to their new family of faith, the whole congregation is sprinkled liberally with baptismal holy water, physically sharing in what they have just witnessed. All process back to their seats in song as we await the new light of Easter.

The congregation sings a glorious Spiritual as we wade in the waters of anticipation, the glow of the Resurrection is seen behind the screen between us and the holy altar; the screen is parted, and we rise to hear the most beautiful words in any language: "Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!" Priest and people exchange this greeting three times. A glorious song of praise follows as the screen is removed completely and light floods the church with everyone ringing their hand bells (or keys on key-rings!) at the

mention of “Alleluia”. At this moment the air shimmers with light and sound--pointing to the mystery we share and celebrate.

After the Gospel of the Resurrection is read, the *Easter Homily of St. John Chrysostom* (a sermon that has been preached worldwide on this night for 1700 years) is proclaimed with the congregation taking its part as directed. The First Eucharist of Easter is then celebrated, the newly-baptized receiving their first Communion as members of the Body of Christ.

Now the liturgy begun on Thursday night is brought to a glorious conclusion with a final blessing and a dismissal complete with many Alleluias. As we sing a closing hymn the congregation leaves what earlier seemed a dark tomb clothed in absence but is now revealed to be a bright temple of God’s glorious and abiding presence. On the way out, the priest greets each person giving the Paschal Greeting, “Christ is risen!” to which we respond “The Lord is risen indeed!”

### **Sunday, April 5<sup>th</sup> (10 AM Livestreamed)**

#### **8 and 10 AM: Easter Day Liturgies (an “after party” that extends from the Vigil)**

The Easter Day liturgies tell the story of the women meeting the Risen Christ at the tomb. It is a moving account of spiritual awakening and devoted love. The familiar Easter hymns, beautiful flowers and Holy Eucharist all combine to bring our Easter Day celebrations to a radiant and peaceful conclusion. Easter Day has come—but Eastertide has just begun! It has 50 days of bright celebration to savor and enjoy!

+ + +

### **Other wonderful offerings during Holy Week:**

**March 30<sup>th</sup> – Holy Monday - Evening Prayer** at 7 PM - Liturgy in the Nave

Led by EFM (Education for Ministry)

**March 31<sup>st</sup> – Holy Tuesday – Chrism Mass** at 11 AM - First Lutheran Church of West Seattle (4105 California Ave SW) w/ light lunch to follow

Annual gathering of all the clergy of the Diocese of Olympia and NW Synod ELCA Lutherans to bless the chrism used at baptisms for the year and renew ordination vows (all are welcome regardless of ordination status)

**March 31<sup>st</sup> – Holy Tuesday – Intergenerational Stations of the Cross** at 7 PM - Liturgy in the Nave

Led by Megan McInnis, Director of Formation

**April 1<sup>st</sup> – Holy Wednesday – Final Class w/ Dr. Frank Spina** at 7 PM - Class in the Nave