

Holy Week 2020

Resource

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Olympia, Washington

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with

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Holy Week

This document is intended to assist in the observance of Holy Week. The Gospel of Mark will be the reference for this effort. This follows the lead of Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan in their book The Last Week.

For those who do not really get much from reading, I would suggest that Jesus Christ, Superstar a rock opera by Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Weber is a good vehicle for getting the story. There is also a movie version of this play. While it conflates all of the gospels, the story is there.

The structure for each day will follow the format of Scripture, Focus Scripture, Reflection, and Worship Service.

All scripture quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

The Scripture will be the entire Mark scripture for that day. The Focus Scripture may be a subset of the Scripture which will focus on the theme being used for that day in this document. It may be the entire scripture. The reflection will be a brief essay about the meaning that day. The section titled Worship Service will be about how a worship service might be conducted for that day. We also offer home devotionals for those who do not choose to attend a formal worship service.

If First Christian Church is not offering a worship service, or other activity, or you choose not to attend any of them, the reader is encouraged to use the meditation service offered in this guide. What First Christian Church offers may differ from what is described. The Pastor draws on other resources which complement what is presented here.

Palm Sunday

Scripture: Mark 11:1-11

Focus Scripture: Mark 11:1-11

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'" They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Reflection:

While it is not widely known, Borg and Crossan contend that there were actually two processions into Jerusalem that Sunday morning. One was the usual military procession by the Romans who came to Jerusalem at Passover time to demonstrate the power of Rome and its imperial theology, and to suppress any uprisings that might happen at this volatile time.

The second procession was that of Jesus riding a donkey (as opposed to a warhorse in the other procession) with a display of God's peace and justice as the theme.

The Roman procession is not mentioned in any Gospel.

Worship Service:

Palm Sunday is also known as Passion Sunday in some places. Most often Palm Sunday is celebrated with a procession of palm branches at the beginning of the service and waving of them during the service. Passion Sunday features a reading of the entire Passion story from one of the Gospels. This is often a dramatic reading with many taking part. Sometimes the two may be combined.

Meditation:

Light a candle

Place the palm frond cross at the base of the candle

Read Blessing of Palms

This blessing can be heard coming from a long way off.

This blessing is making its steady way up the road toward you.

This blessing blooms in the throats of women springs from the hearts of men tumbles from the mouths of children.

This blessing is stitched into the seams of the cloaks that line the road, etched into the branches that trace the path, echoes in the breathing of the willing colt, the click of the donkey's hoof against the stones.

Something is rising beneath this blessing.

Something will try to drown it out.

But this blessing cannot be turned back, cannot be made to still its voice, cannot cease to sing its praise of the one who comes along the way it makes.

—Jan Richardson

Imagine the crowds that gathered that day some 2000 years ago. Those who were drawn by the splendor of power, the extravagance and of the military procession and those who gathered with fearful, joyous hope. The ragtag band of followers and dreamers and people who were desperate for change. Watching as Jesus rode through a side gate on the back of a young colt rather than a mighty warhorse.

Where do you find yourself standing? Where is your hope?

Silent Prayer – sit in silence for a minute or two. Allow yourself to notice your thoughts without centering on one. Let them pass through, take note, but don't obsess.

Prayer – gently move from the silence into intentional prayer.

1. Pray for the world, its leaders, its people,
2. Pray for creation and every living being
3. Pray for the country, wisdom for our leaders and opening of hearts that the worldly things that divide us be reconciled.
4. Pray for our city – for healing, for hope, for continued ways we find to be in community.
5. Pray for our congregation – that we may continue to be open to where the Spirit is leading.
6. Pray for those who are suffering
7. Pray for those who are sick.
8. Pray for your own needs.
9. Pray that you be granted wisdom, peace, courage and strength.

End this meditation time by reading the blessing

May The Light Of Your Soul Guide You, by John O'Donohue

May the light of your soul guide you.

May the light of your soul bless the work

You do with the secret love and warmth of your heart.

May you see in what you do the beauty of your own soul.

May the sacredness of your work bring healing, light and renewal to those

Who work with you and to those who see and receive your work.

May your work never weary you.

May it release within you wellsprings of refreshment, inspiration and excitement.

May you be present in what you do.

May you never become lost in the bland absences.

May the day never burden you.

May dawn find you awake and alert, approaching your new day with dreams,

Possibilities and promises.

May evening find you gracious and fulfilled.

May you go into the night blessed, sheltered and protected.

May your soul calm, console and renew you.

Amen

Extinguish the candle.

Holy Monday

Scripture: Mark 11:12-19

Focus Scripture: Mark 11:15-19

Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers." And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching.

And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

Reflection:

Here we will focus on Jesus' actions in "cleansing" the temple. Many have noted that the term "den of thieves" is not about where the stealing takes place, but where the thieves shelter. Borg and Crossan understand that this is another protest against injustice. How do we in our age understand the idea of injustice? Are we about seeing that all have enough?

Let us look underneath the money changing, and buying and selling. Money would be changed because the Roman money (coins) had a portrait of the emperor on them. This violated the instructions (law) not to have an image of any person or animal. Thus the only coins that could be used in the temple were Hebrew coins. Doves and other animals were sold to the pilgrims who did not (or could not) bring their own animals to be sacrificed. This was originally intended as a service to the pilgrims. Money changers and animal sellers made a fat profit and thus were seen as thieves.

Part of the Roman Imperial Theology was that the emperor was divine, a god if you will. This was true of the emperor Augustus while he was still alive. Most often an emperor had to have died to be deified.

Worship Service:

There is no traditional form of worship service for Holy Monday. Now would be a good time for home reflection on all of the injustices in our world today and to ask ourselves what we can do about changing the systems that create these injustices. We might gather together with friends and family in small groups.

Meditation:

Light a candle

Place a small stuffed lamb or a picture of a lamb at the base of the candle or

Place the palm frond cross at the base of the candle

Read Blessing Beloved Is Where We Begin

If you would enter into the wilderness, do not begin without a blessing.

Do not leave without hearing who you are:

Beloved, named by the One who has traveled this path before you.

Do not go without letting it echo in your ears,

And if you find it is hard to let it into your heart, do not despair.

That is what this journey is for.

I cannot promise this blessing will free you from danger, from fear,

From hunger or thirst, from the scorching of sun or the fall of the night.

But I can tell you that on this path there will be help.

I can tell you that on this way there will be rest.

I can tell you that you will know the strange graces

That come to our aid only on a road such as this,

That fly to meet us bearing comfort and strength,

That come alongside us for no other cause than to lean themselves toward our ear

And with their curious insistence whisper our name:

Beloved.

Beloved.

Beloved.

—Jan Richardson.

You are part of the crowd in the temple where commerce is taking place. An uproar takes place across the platform. Suddenly you see tables overturned and animals running about. Jesus is calling out to the money changers about robbers. Is Jesus likely to face retaliation?

Where do you find yourself standing? Where is your hope?

Silent Prayer – sit in silence for a minute or two. Allow yourself to notice your thoughts without centering on one. Let them pass through, take note, but don't obsess.

Prayer – gently move from the silence into intentional prayer.

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5. Pray for our congregation – that we may continue to be open to where the Spirit is leading.

6. Pray for those who are suffering

7. Pray for those who are sick.
8. Pray for your own needs.
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May you be present in what you do.

May you never become lost in the bland absences.

May the day never burden you.

May dawn find you awake and alert, approaching your new day with dreams,

Possibilities and promises.

May evening find you gracious and fulfilled.

May you go into the night blessed, sheltered and protected.

May your soul calm, console and renew you.

Amen

Extinguish the candle.

Holy Tuesday

Scripture: Mark 11:20-13:37

Focus Scripture: Mark 12:13-17

Then they sent to him some Pharisees and some Herodians to trap him in what he said. And they came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?" But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why are you putting me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me see it." And they brought one. Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" They answered, "The emperor's." Jesus said to them, "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were utterly amazed at him.

Reflection:

Jesus had "discussions" of many things on Holy Tuesday. We have chosen to focus on this issue as it is most commonly misunderstood. Simply stated this was intended as a trap. To answer that taxes were OK would have angered the crowd which supported Jesus. To answer that they were not OK was treason against the Romans who were running the show. Jesus' answer was neither.

Today we really do not understand the way taxes were collected by the Roman Empire. A conquered country was assessed tribute to be paid to Rome. The country then "taxed" the people to cover this tribute. Taxes were not collected at some central location or by assessing property as we do today. Tax collectors (a despised class) would set up at various locations and "tax" people as they came by. They were required to pay the tax collector whatever he demanded. Since tax collectors were not paid, they would keep for themselves part of what they collected. Today we would call this activity a racket.

Through the ages this passage has been abused to promote every kind of injustice. It has been used to uphold the divine-right-of-kings and the idea that the State is all-powerful and cannot be disobeyed. Even civil disobedience is wrong according to some views of this passage. The basic idea is that there are two realms. One realm is that of God and all things spiritual belong there. The other realm is political and the State (ruler, autocrat, etc.) controls all that happens in it. Here Jesus is not telling the crowd that taxes are OK. He is not answering the question at all. He is really raising the question, "what belongs to God?" which to the community in which Jesus lived was simply "everything." The notion that God controls both realms and that it all belongs to God is what Jesus is really talking about.

Worship Service:

There is no traditional form of worship service for Holy Tuesday. Now would be a good time for home reflection on all of our understanding of taxes today and to ask ourselves what we think those taxes really promote. We might gather together with friends and family in small groups.

Meditation:

Light a candle

Place a coin which represents the coin Jesus requests at the base of the candle or

Place the palm frond cross at the base of the candle

Read Blessing Questions

Returning to His Father's house,
Having rested in Bethany,
Brooding over the city below
Jesus begins His teaching.

Boldly interrupted by authorities
Priest, scribes and elders, all.
Who gave you authority
To teach in the temple?

One minute pleads Jesus,
Answer my question first.
John the Baptist, his mission
From God or people?

This scoundrel has trapped us
How dare he challenge we
Upholding the Jewish Law.
We ignore his question.

Another tries another trap ,
Over taxes this time.
Should Caesar be paid?
Yes, what is due rightfully.
Not the answer wanted!

How can we trap this impostor?
Ignoring their ignorance,
He warns His listeners,
Beware the teaching in the temple.

How far they truly are
from the kingdom of God.
Follow this widow's example
giving all to God.

—Marianne Dorman

Imagine being part of the group gathered to hear Jesus speak in the temple grounds. Someone asks if it is lawful to pay taxes. You pay your taxes. You are not happy about it. When you hear Jesus' answer you are puzzled. Does he really mean the emperor owns all of the Roman money? Where is God in this?

Where do you find yourself standing? Where is your hope?

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Possibilities and promises.

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Amen

Extinguish the candle.

Spy Wednesday

Scripture: Mark 14:1-11

Focus Scripture: Mark 14:1-2, 10-11

It was two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him; for they said, "Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people."

...

Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. When they heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

Reflection:

Holy Wednesday or Spy Wednesday is about Judas and his betrayal of Jesus. It might seem to some strange that one of his closest associates would come to betray him to the authorities. There needed to be a traitor in the story about the crucifixion. Since Mark's gospel was written at least 40 years after the event, there is really no way of knowing many of the details. We can only speculate, often from our own perspective alone. Where did the price come from? At this time the price of a healthy male slave was 30 pieces of silver, a piece of silver being a denarius. The crowds on Palm Sunday were supportive of Jesus. Jesus had to be arrested by stealth or resistance could be expected.

Worship Service:

There is no traditional form of worship service for Spy Wednesday. Now would be a good time for home reflection on how the world betrays those who oppose. We might gather together with friends and family in small groups.

Meditation:

Light a candle

Place a picture of 30 pieces of silver or 30 small silver coins at the base of the candle or

Place the palm frond cross at the base of the candle

Read Blessing The Betrayal

What makes a friend betray a friend?

Envy? Jealousy? Power?

We can only guess

Why Judas went to the High Priest.

He bargained with them

For thirty pieces of silver,

The price for a slave

To betray His Master.

What was he thinking?

When he arranged a time

To deliver Him up

To those who hated Jesus.

The sign was a kiss.

Can you betray your Master

With an affectionate sign?

O Judas, how could you!

It was too, too late

To your senses you came.

What have I done?

Betrayed innocent blood.

—Marianne Dorman

Are there questions about who Jesus really is? Should he be stopped? These are some of the things Judas might have been thinking about when he went to the priests.

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Who work with you and to those who see and receive your work.
May your work never weary you.
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May you be present in what you do.
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May the day never burden you.
May dawn find you awake and alert, approaching your new day with dreams,
Possibilities and promises.
May evening find you gracious and fulfilled.
May you go into the night blessed, sheltered and protected.
May your soul calm, console and renew you.

Amen

Extinguish the candle.

Maundy Thursday

Scripture: Mark 14:12-72

Focus Scripture: Mark 14:22-25

While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread' and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Reflection:

Disciples celebrate the breaking of bread every time we gather. On Maundy Thursday we combine this with other celebrations, some traditional and others not so much. We regard this time of institution as monumental in Christianity.

It is worth noting "Maundy" comes from the Latin word *mandatum*, or commandment, reflecting Jesus' words "I give you a new commandment."

Much of the gospels and particularly the Gospel of Mark are about meals. Shared meals were feature of Jesus' ministry. Many things that are not really meals are part of this gospel and show how food was very much a part of this time. There is the parable of the sower, question about fasting, parables about seeds growing, yeast of the Pharisees, and the incident with the fig tree. Jesus feeds the five thousand, then a couple of chapters later feeds the four thousand. These last two may be different tellings of the same memory since the details are the same or similar.

The institution of the Lord's supper takes place in the shared meal known as the *Seder* or Passover meal. In this we see echoes of the feeding of the five thousand in that Jesus took, blessed, and broke.

Shared meals are very Christian.

Worship Service:

This is often a time for the Tenebrae service. Tenebrae (Latin for "shadows" or "darkness") is celebrated within Western Christianity on the evening before or early morning of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. Tenebrae is distinctive for its gradual extinguishing of candles while a series of readings and psalms are chanted or recited.

Meditation:

Light a candle

Place a loaf and a cup at the base of the candle or

Place the palm frond cross at the base of the candle

Read Blessing Blessing You Cannot Turn Back

As if you could stop this blessing from washing over you.

As if you could turn it back, could return it from your body to the bowl, from the bowl to the pitcher, from the pitcher to the hand that set this blessing on its way.

As if you could change the course by which this blessing flows.

As if you could control how it pours over you—unbidden, unsought, unasked, yet startling in the way it matches the need you did not know you had.

As if you could become undrenched.

As if you could resist gathering it up in your two hands and letting your body follow the arc this blessing makes.

—Jan Richardson

Imagine you are one of Jesus' chosen disciples. As you file in and take your place at the table, you begin to wonder if this will be the last time you eat with Jesus. Now Jesus takes some bread and breaks it and passes it around and then takes up a cup and passes it around. While he blesses both the bread and the cup, he talks about his impending death.

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Good Friday

Scripture: Mark 15:1-41

Focus Scripture: Mark 15:1-41

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He answered him, "You say so." Then the chief priests accused him of many things. Pilate asked him again, "Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you." But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. Then he answered them, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" They shouted back, "Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus.

Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! you who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself and come down from the cross!" In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.

At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of the bystanders heard it,

they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah." And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

Reflection:

Good Friday, also known as Black Friday, is about the day of Jesus' crucifixion and death. It is a good time for introspection and looking into our own lives in respect to how we interact with our fellow persons. If Palm Sunday was celebrated as Passion Sunday much of the crucifixion story has already been recounted.

Worship Service:

Commemorations are often solemn and mournful; many denominations use Good Friday to perform the Stations of the Cross, or other commemorations of the Passion, either as a self-guided time of reflection and veneration or as a procession of statues or images of the stations.

Meditation:

Light a candle

Place a small cross made from rough wood (or twigs) at the base of the candle or

Place the palm frond cross at the base of the candle

Read Blessing What Abides

You will know this blessing by how it does not stay still,
by the way it refuses to rest in one place.

You will recognize it by how it takes first one form, then another:

now running down the face of the mother who watches the breaking of the child she had borne,
now in the stance of the woman who followed him here and will not leave him bereft.

Now it twists in anguish on the mouth of the friend whom he loved;
now it bares itself in the wound, the cry, the finishing and final breath.

This blessing is not in any one of these alone.

It is what binds them together.

It is what dwells in the space between them, though it be torn and gaping.

It is what abides in the tear the rending makes.

—Jan Richardson

You are standing at the foot of the hill looking up at three crosses. You are horrified by what you see. Then you realize that one of the crosses holds Jesus. Is this the Jesus that was cheered on Sunday?

Where do you find yourself standing? Where is your hope?

Silent Prayer – sit in silence for a minute or two. Allow yourself to notice your thoughts without centering on one. Let them pass through, take note, but don't obsess.

Prayer – gently move from the silence into intentional prayer.

1. Pray for the world, its leaders, its people,
2. Pray for creation and every living being
3. Pray for the country, wisdom for our leaders and opening of hearts that the worldly things that divide us be reconciled.
4. Pray for our city – for healing, for hope, for continued ways we find to be in community.
5. Pray for our congregation – that we may continue to be open to where the Spirit is leading.
6. Pray for those who are suffering
7. Pray for those who are sick.
8. Pray for your own needs.
9. Pray that you be granted wisdom, peace, courage and strength.

End this meditation time by reading the blessing

May The Light Of Your Soul Guide You, by John O'Donohue

May the light of your soul guide you.

May the light of your soul bless the work

You do with the secret love and warmth of your heart.

May you see in what you do the beauty of your own soul.

May the sacredness of your work bring healing, light and renewal to those

Who work with you and to those who see and receive your work.

May your work never weary you.

May it release within you wellsprings of refreshment, inspiration and excitement.

May you be present in what you do.

May you never become lost in the bland absences.

May the day never burden you.

May dawn find you awake and alert, approaching your new day with dreams,

Possibilities and promises.

May evening find you gracious and fulfilled.

May you go into the night blessed, sheltered and protected.

May your soul calm, console and renew you.

Amen

Extinguish the candle.

Holy Saturday

Scripture: Mark 15:42-47

Focus Scripture: Mark 15:42-47

When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where the body was laid.

Reflection:

Holy Saturday is the day between the crucifixion of Jesus and his resurrection. As the Sabbath day, the Gospel accounts all note that Jesus was hurriedly buried in a cave tomb after his crucifixion, with the intent to finish proper embalming and burial ceremonies on Sunday, after the Sabbath had ended, as the Sabbath day prohibitions would have prevented observant Jews from completing a proper burial.

Worship Service:

While daytime services or commemorations of the day are rare in the Western tradition, after sundown on Holy Saturday is the traditional time for Easter Vigil.

The Easter Vigil Begins at sundown with the lighting of the “new fire.” It consists of four parts. What these four parts are called depends on what tradition they come out of. They are:

- 1 The Service of Light
- 2 The Service of the Word
- 3 The Service of the Baptismal Covenant
- 4 The Service of the Table

The Vigil will last most of the night. One artifact of the complete Vigil is the Easter Sunrise service in many churches. In the early church no special Sunday service would be held since Easter had been celebrated with the Sunrise.

Meditation:

Light a candle

Place bowl of water at the base of the candle or

Place the palm frond cross at the base of the candle

Read Blessing The Art of Enduring

This blessing can wait as long as you can.

Longer.

This blessing began eons ago and knows the art of enduring.

This blessing has passed through ages and generations,

witnessed the turning of centuries,

weathered the spiraling of history.

This blessing is in no rush.

This blessing will plant itself by your door.

This blessing will keep vigil and chant prayers.

This blessing will bring a friend for company.

This blessing will pack a lunch and a thermos of coffee.

This blessing will bide its sweet time until it hears the beginning of breath, the stirring of limbs, the stretching, reaching, rising of what had lain dead within you and is ready to return.

—Jan Richardson

All of your friends have gathered during the dark following everything that has happened to your world. There is much fear in the room. All is lost.

Where do you find yourself standing? Where is your hope?

Silent Prayer – sit in silence for a minute or two. Allow yourself to notice your thoughts without centering on one. Let them pass through, take note, but don't obsess.

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May evening find you gracious and fulfilled.

May you go into the night blessed, sheltered and protected.

May your soul calm, console and renew you.

Amen

Extinguish the candle.

Easter Sunday

While Easter Sunday is not really part of Holy Week, it is included here for completeness.

Scripture: Mark 16:1-8

Focus Scripture: Mark 16:1-8

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Reflection: The gospels are very different in their recounts of the resurrection. Bishop John Shelby Spong in his book Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism has a take on this problem which I completely agree with.

“The experience of Jesus as risen Lord, the breaker of the barrier of death, empowering presence in the life of the church underlies every verse of the Christian writings. There is no question about the reality of Easter as a source of power or the centrality of Easter in the life of the believer. Obviously something happened after the death of Jesus that had startling and enormous power. Its power was sufficient to reconstitute a scattered and demoralized band of disciples. Its reality was profound enough to turn a denying Peter into a witnessing and martyred Peter, and to turn disciples who fled for their lives into heroes willing to die for their Lord. Easter was so intense that it created a new holy day, the first day of the week, and in turn a new liturgical act, the breaking of bread, turning both into a weekly celebration of the presence of the living Lord in their midst. Easter was of such power that Jewish disciples taught from the time of their cradle that God alone was holy, that God alone was to be venerated, prayed to, and worshiped now no longer conceive of God apart from Jesus of Nazareth. They could also no longer look at Jesus of Nazareth without seeing God. Whatever Easter was literally for the disciples, it meant that Jesus had been taken into God and vindicated by God. It also meant that Jesus had transcended death and was therefore ever present to the disciples as the animating Spirit. That was what the word *Easter* came to stand for in this faith community.

“The words that gave rational form to that experience came later.”

