

Liturgies of Lent, Holy Week and Easter 3/18/18 TCP

Holy Week and Easter are the center of the life of the church: Celebrating The Suffering, Death and Resurrection of Jesus

Holy Week & Easter is a dramatic remembrance of these events. Not like liturgical reenactors, but entering into the events of the past as *present* realities (with roots in Passover).

In most languages, “Easter” is “Pascha” the new “Passover”

The ancient church prepared for the paschal mysteries in the season of **Lent** (‘slowing down’)

- Restoring the penitent who had been separated from the church for their sins
- Renewing the Christian Community
- Picking up the penitence of Monastic Communities
- Preparation of catechumens (preparing for Baptism)

This became a season of fasting and preparation (40 days, plus the Sundays)

Starting with **Ash Wednesday** (BCP, page 264; read the description of Lent there)

Acknowledging our sins, marking the season of penitence,
awareness of our mortality, with ashes (and with the Eucharist!)

The Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday (BCP, page 270)

Remembering the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem (with the procession; as in Jerusalem)

Also Passion Sunday (based on ancient precedent): a turn toward Jesus’ torture and crucifixion.

“Passion Plays”

Anticipating Holy Week

?What is the impact of the move from joy to crucifixion?

The Great Three Days: The “Triduum”

One Great Drama of Jesus’ death and resurrection spread out over three days:

Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, (Holy Saturday), The Great Vigil of Easter

Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services end without dismissal:

they are a continuation of the same celebration that ends at the Great Vigil.

The Great Vigil starts in darkness for the vigil of readings and prayer,

and shifts to celebration of the first Eucharist of Easter.

The Paschal Cycle

“Pascha,” from Hebrew word for Passover, is the usual word for “Easter” in most languages

Passover/Easter:

Remembrance (making real, for today and us, the events of the past: Exodus/Jesus)

Meal (Passover/Last Supper)

Passover Lamb (whose blood saves from death: Exodus/Crucifixion)

(Jesus is also a sacrifice for sin)

Salvation (from slavery/from sin and death)

Maundy Thursday (BCP, page 274)

Commemoration of the Last Supper
Institution of the Eucharist,
Footwashing (depending on local practice)
Stripping of the altar (Garden of Gethsemane and arrest)
Vigil of prayer for Good Friday (starting with Psalm 22)

Exodus 12:1-14 (the Passover)

1 Corinthians 11:23-32 (The Eucharist)

Luke 22:14-30 (the Eucharist at the Last Supper) (use if no footwashing)

OR: John 13:1-15 (Footwashing at the Last Supper) (use if doing footwashing)

“Maundy” is from the Latin “mandatum” or ‘mandate’

“Do this in remembrance of me” (bread and wine: 1 Cor 11:24-25, Luke 22:19)

“Love one another as I have loved you” (John 13:34)

“...you also ought to wash one another's feet” (John 13:14-15)

Not a Seder (it is a new Passover, celebrated in the liturgies of the Great Three Days)
How should the church practice footwashing? And why?

Good Friday (BCP, page 276.)

Reflects one piece of the three-day celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus.
Evidence of celebrating this day since the 4th century, generally with no celebration of the Eucharist. It included the veneration of the cross.
We include the “**Solemn Collects**” with a bidding that asks for prayer for particular reasons, silence for prayer and a collect to sum up the prayers that respond to that bidding.

The “Three Hours Service” was based on a Latin American Jesuit service, using traditional “Seven Last Words of Christ,” with short sermons preached on each one over the course of three hours (Jesus hung on the cross for three hours).
1979 BCP returned to the basic liturgy of the Word with the passion narrative, and the veneration of the cross, with the option for communion from the reserved sacrament.

Holy Saturday (BCP page 283)

A brief prayer service (generally at midday) commemorating Jesus being laid in the tomb.
Reading Job 14:1-14; 1 Peter 4:1-8; Matthew 27:57-66 or John 19:38-42. We have not held this service at St. Peter & St. Paul in recent years.

The Great Vigil of Easter (BCP, page 285)

This is the completion of the service of the Great Three Days (continuing from MThurs & GFri)
This is the first Eucharist of Easter and the prototype for all Sunday Eucharist services.
It combines a vigil of readings and prayers recounting God’s saving acts in history, Baptism and the Eucharist. It is a new and Christian pascha, an echo and fulfilment of the first Passover.
It moves from darkness to light: in the ancient church lasting all night until sunrise on Easter day.

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The Great Vigil of Easter (continued)

This was when the catechumens (preparing for Baptism) were Baptized and admitted to communion. In their 1-2 year preparation, they were dismissed from the assembly after the liturgy of the Word and before the Liturgy of the Table. Thus they were Baptized and shared in communion at the Great Vigil. This is one of the four occasions especially set aside by the church for Baptism.

Starts with the service of light: outside the church, lighting the new fire, and from it, the paschal candle. The candle is brought into the church, and the people light candles from the paschal candle and share “the light of Christ.” The Deacon chants the ancient hymn “The Exultet” which praises God for this holy night, “bright with a glorious splendor, for darkness has been vanquished by our eternal King.” Following the model of Passover, we are invited into *remembrance*, making real for us today the events of the past:

This is the night, when you brought our fathers, the children of Israel, out of bondage in Egypt, and led them through the Red Sea on dry land.

This is the night, when all who believe in Christ are delivered from the gloom of sin, and are restored to grace and holiness of life.

This is the night, when Christ broke the bonds of death and hell, and rose victorious from the grave.

We then hear nine readings from the Old Testament that recount how God saved his people in ages past in preparation for the fullness of salvation in Jesus Christ. These readings include creation, Noah and the flood, saving of Israel at the Red Sea, the valley of the dry bones given life, and promises of salvation in the prophets. After each reading can be a psalm, and then a prayer fitting to the reading. The church remains in darkness for this vigil of readings. Then the assembly renews our Baptismal vows and celebrates Baptism if there are candidates prepared.

At the conclusion of the Baptism, the lights come up and the first Eucharist of Easter is celebrated, with readings about Jesus’ resurrection, hymns and anthems and the church dressed in white.

There are many ways that this service can be structured (differently from what is described above). In some cases, the service begins in the dark before sunrise, and concludes after sunrise. The move from darkness to light is a feature of this service.

The Great Three Days:

These services invite participation in the great culmination of God’s saving acts in Jesus Christ, in his death and resurrection. Easter is not the same celebration without the whole paschal cycle. If you haven’t walked the whole journey from Palm Sunday through Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and the Great Vigil, you are really missing a great blessing! Come join us!