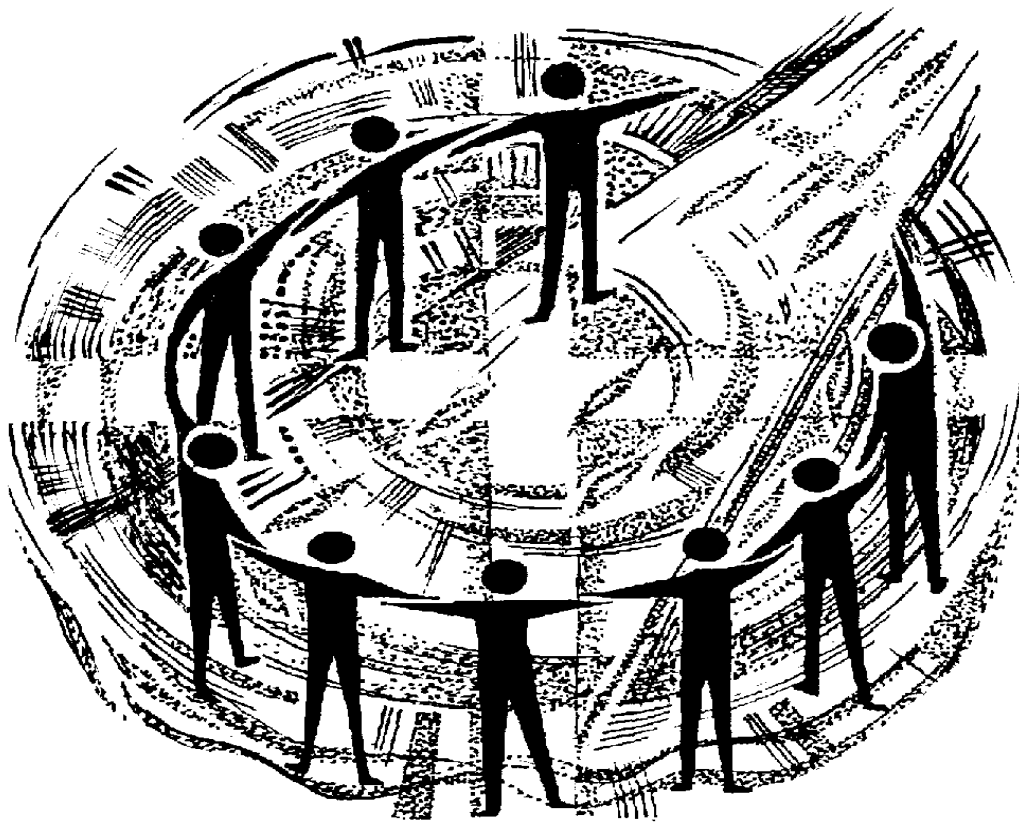


Our Lady Immaculate and St Andrew Parish

- Hitchin -

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SERVICES

- 2024 -



Thy Kingdom Come!

Sacrament of Reconciliation

From now until Wednesday 27th March the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be after every Mass including weekends (*Please see the Priest in the sacristy after Mass to let him know you want the sacrament.*)

From Thurs 28th March, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is not celebrated again until Sat of the 2nd Week of Easter 13th April

25th – 27th March Mass at 10am

Mon 25th March 7pm: Celebration of the Passover Meal in the Hall. We prepare for the Last Supper of Jesus, by reliving the Freedom Celebration of the Passover. (For those who have booked)

Tues 25th March 12pm: Mass of Chrism: Westminster Cathedral

The Easter Triduum is the culmination of the liturgical year. It begins with Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper (on Holy Thursday), reaches its high point in the Easter Vigil and closes with Evening Mass on Easter Sunday. It is the church's solemn festival of the Paschal Mystery, the Mystery of our faith.

The Easter Triduum is one whole celebration, not a series of separate elements. Each celebration sheds light on the others and flows to and from them. They are not intended to be thought of as a chronological re-enactment of events as if we had no idea of what might happen next (i.e. to celebrate Good Friday rather like a funeral, as if we had never heard of the Resurrection).

MAUNDY THURSDAY: 28th March

10am: Morning Prayer



8pm: MASS OF THE LAST SUPPER

(1¼ hours)

To show that this is only the first part of a three-day liturgy, a passage through death, the first reading is about the Passover, which until the time of Jesus was the definitive ritual of rebirth.

We see what is meant by discipleship, by Jesus' own example, in word and deed. The Last Supper could have been the climax of Jesus' life and work; most people would say there is nothing more God needs to

do than kneel and wash our feet (we dramatise the Gospel with the washing of feet), and to give us a means (the Eucharist) by which he can be present to us for ever. This is enough to demonstrate what love means, surely. The gift of the Eucharist means emptying ourselves out, in service of those around us: we need His Body and Blood to enable us to do this.

The practical outcome of witnessing the act of service in the footwashing, is the collection of money and gifts, especially those gathered during Lent as the fruit of penance, which today is directed to be given to the poor. These gifts are brought up in the Procession, while Ubi Caritas is sung. This follows the Holy Oils, blessed by the bishop at the Chrism Mass, which are received at this time.

Paul reminds us in the earliest account of the Eucharist, this was also 'the night he was betrayed.' After an unmistakable demonstration of his love, all the twelve (not just Judas) abandoned him. The question for us is 'Can you not watch an hour with me and pray?' (You are invited to watch with Jesus in the hall for a half-hour or more until midnight.) It was not a simple meal Jesus has giving us, but his life, of which the meal is a sign. We strip the altar to show the depth of our sorrow. Jesus is no longer in the tabernacle and the church is emptied.

The Washing of Feet
Welcome the Holy Oils
Stripping the Altar
Procession to the Altar of Repose
Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament till Midnight

GOOD FRIDAY: 29th March

10am: Morning Prayer

10.40am: We walk with our Cross from our church to the town square for the Churches Together in Hitchin Good Friday prayers. There is no formal procession again this year.

12pm: (not in church but for you at home) Live streaming of **The Passion of Christ** from Trafalgar Square in the church (1¼ hours) Click on link <https://www.facebook.com/Wintershallplay>

3pm: Solemn Liturgy of the Passion (1½ hours)

Today we see the Triumph of the Cross. Jesus is not dead and we should not pretend that he is. St John shows Jesus as 'reigning from the tree'; much is made of the sign 'The King of the Jews'; Jesus commends his mother and the beloved disciple to each other (a scene only found in St John), and knowing that all has been accomplished, he bows his head and gives up his spirit. Before this, we hear about the servant of God who took the world's sins on himself (Isaiah), and about Jesus our High Priest who understands our human condition because he humbly submitted to temptation and suffering (Hebrews). We hear the Passion Narrative in order to reflect on Jesus' love for us. After this, we pray the great Prayer of Intercession for the world.

Today's liturgy has unique features which date back many centuries. It begins with the simplest of opening rites: a procession and a prayer. The General Intercessions are a model of what such prayers should be: an intention is proposed; we pray in silence; the priest 'collects' our prayer. It is clear that it is the whole congregation which prays. The Veneration of the Cross was already in existence in the 4th century, though the Reproaches are more recent. The Communion came later, and now forms an integral part of our service as we venerate the Cross and then receive Communion, directly sharing in His Passion, before the blessing to send us out to continue our prayer - in life!

*The liturgy begins and ends in silence, which makes it a bridge from Thursday to the Vigil. As said above, Jesus is not dead; though we wait until Sunday to sing **Jesus is risen**. But the important thing is to recall the journey that Jesus made. Indeed, we make that journey ourselves. If we say at Easter that we are risen with Christ, today we die with him.*

6.30pm: An Hour with the Cross led by Fr Tom with a focus on Peace in Gaza, Israel and Ukraine.

HOLY SATURDAY: 30th March

10am: Morning Prayer around our Cross

8pm: The Easter Vigil (1½-1¾ hours) (we gather outside the church on the street side around the fire in the garden)

THIS IS THE NIGHT *when Jesus Christ conquered death, and Christians everywhere come together in vigil to honour the memory of his rising to life. It is the night when new Christians are baptised, and 'old' Christians retrace their own*



journey from baptism to the Table of the Lord. Those to be baptized pass into the tomb, die with Christ to sin and rise to new life; and the already baptized relive their own death to sin by renewing their Baptismal Promises. The candidates are confirmed by the Holy Spirit, and then come to the Eucharist for the first time, which is what this night is directed towards. The liturgy has three main parts: Word, Baptism, and EUCHARIST the climax. They are approached through the year's most splendid entrance rite: the liturgy of LIGHT. (This year we have two candidates who are being received and one for confirmation – no baptisms)

LIGHT *This is a combination of the ritual of the evening **lighting of the lamps** (Lucernarium) which dates from the earliest centuries of the Church, and the kindling of new fire. The **Fire Rite** has varied origins, which include pre-Christian ones, and has had many interpretations, but it is seen now as a sign of Christ's power over the forces of darkness, which is why this liturgy takes place at night. The fire gives light to the candle which is inscribed with the marks of Christ's passion and his lordship over all time. Christ's people walk behind the candle, as the Israelites walked behind the pillar of fire. The first announcement of the Resurrection is in the Easter Proclamation (Exsultet) which was originally called 'The Praise of the Candle'.*

WORD *The Liturgy of the word is in two blocks, Old and New Testament. The Gloria comes in the middle and the Gospel Acclamation marks the return of the Alleluia after a forty-day fast. The history of salvation from Genesis to Ezekiel will be listened to in a darkened church, though enlightened by the Light of Christ in the candle; Resurrection light then illuminates the celebration. Among those listening tonight are people waiting to be baptised, still learning and wondering.*

WATER *Happy our community which welcomes new members tonight - please God it might be an annual occurrence! This is almost the end of the Lenten journey, but more than that it is the fulfilment of the Genesis creation reading (a New creation), the parting of the waters (Exodus), the 'clean water' of Ezekiel, the joining with Christ in death (Paul) and the springing from the tomb (Gospel.)*

EUCHARIST *Eucharist is not an afterthought after the 'exciting' part of this liturgy, but the whole point of it: it is what the whole Vigil builds up to and why Christ came to earth. He is not dead; he is with us till the end of time in the form of bread and wine as he said at the Last Supper. If we had*

any doubts or felt his absence, we can recognise him again tonight in the breaking of bread. For the new initiates this is their first Eucharist, the pinnacle of initiation; for the whole Church it is the 'source and summit of Christian life.'

Blessing of the Fire
Liturgy of the Word
Gospel of the Resurrection
Liturgy of Blessing of the Baptismal Water
Renewal of Baptismal Vows and Sprinkling with Easter Water

*Our Easter Joy is brought to its fulfilment in
the Celebration of the First Eucharist of Easter*

EASTER SUNDAY: 31st March

Masses 8.30am, 10.30am, 5pm

Renewal of Baptismal Vows at all Masses

Many people saw Jesus die. We venerated an image of his cross two days ago. Crosses and crucifixes are the central symbols of Christianity. No-one saw him rise again, and only the eyes of faith can sustain us in our belief that he overcame death. In the Gospel this morning, the voice of Jesus is not heard - as at Christmas, the second greatest feast of the year. Women are the first to hear the news of the Resurrection. Mary of Magdala is mentioned by three evangelists as one of the first to see the empty tomb, but does not know what it means: she only thinks Jesus has been taken away. In the Vigil Gospel of Mark, read last night, Mary is one of several women who are told by the angels that Jesus is risen; and in today's Gospel of John, she is the first to see the Lord. Peter doesn't understand either; it is only the beloved disciple who realises what 'rising from the dead' means. Nevertheless Peter is seen in the first reading preaching as a witness to the risen Christ - he has 'eaten and drunk with him after his resurrection.' If we feel rather bereft - they have taken the Lord away - we can learn from the reactions of the people who were there, and follow their journey to faith, through amazement and fear to joy. We too have eaten and drunk with Jesus. We do it at every Mass.

EASTER WEEK: Mass at 10am

DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY: 7th April

Program of the day

1.30pm Confessions – Sacrament of Reconciliation

2pm to 3pm Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, and Benediction

3.30pm Chaplet of Divine Mercy and Litany and Praises of Divine Mercy

Homily on Divine Mercy

Enthronement Prayers, blessing of the Divine Mercy Image and veneration of the Image

5pm Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

After Mass there will be bring and share refreshments in the hall

Frs. Justin, Adams, Tom, and Andrew and our Pastoral Assistants, Ciara and Trish, and our Administrator Cheryl would like to wish you and yours the joys, blessings and peace of Easter!



The Lord is Risen - He is risen indeed: ALLELUIA !

Timetable of events *at a glance*

- 23/24 March **Palm Sunday** Masses (Sat 6pm), 8.30am, 10.30am, 5pm
- 25 March Passover Meal 7.30pm
- 28 March **Maundy Thursday**
Morning prayer 10am
Mass of the Last Supper 8pm
- 29 March **Good Friday**
Morning prayer 10am
followed by Walk to Town Square 10.40am for 11am
Liturgy of the Passion 3pm
Stations of the Cross 6.30 pm
- 30 March **Holy Saturday**
Morning prayer 10am
Easter Vigil 8pm
- 31 March **Easter Sunday**
Masses 8.30am, 10.30am, 5pm
- 1 - 6 April Mass 10am
- 7 April **Divine Mercy Sunday** Programme 1.30pm – 5.45pm
including Mass



Commentary is extracts from Liturgy Planner by Stephen Dean