

Monday 6<sup>th</sup> April

# Holy Week at Home



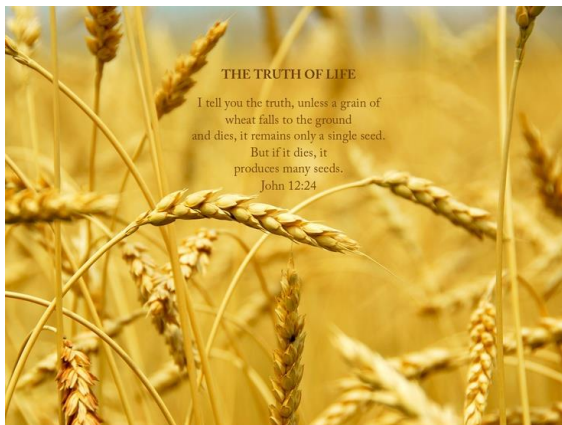
How to do Holy week without church?

During Holy week millions of Christians usually gather in local churches to physically enter into the story of Christ's passion. We wave our palms and shout *Hosanna!*, just as the crowds did when Jesus entered Jerusalem but we quickly turn, as crowds can, and cry *Crucify!* to remember our part in the rejection of Jesus. We allow our feet to be washed, and taste the bread and wine, remembering the final meal Christ shared with his disciples. We sit in darkened church, late into the night, trying to stay awake where the disciples

failed. We watch the cross being carried, perhaps even kiss its wood. We sing mournfully of the death of our loved one. And then... either late, late at night, or early in the morning while it is still dark we gather once again. While others sleep we light a fire, remembering the resurrection that happened secretly in the dark and from that fire light our new Easter candle. Then, at the top of our voices, with instruments and saucepan lids we would create a din, telling the whole world '*He is risen! Alleluia!!!*'

Sound, smell, taste, action – each of these has been crucial for us to remember that this story is not just from the past but rather every year, every day, it opens its arms to us and invites us in. So the question this year is 'how do we enter into this story when at home, rather than gathered in church?' This weeks clergy reflections on Facebook will attempt to offer ideas in answer. Today's gospel reading (John 12:1-11) gives an encounter of Jesus' friend Mary covering his feet with expensive perfume. It was an extravagant act, which spoke of her love, his preciousness and his forthcoming burial. What is the most loving gift anyone has given you? Who can you remind today that they are precious? Why not today take a walk and breathe in the fragrance of flowers, light a scented candle or put on your best perfume – and whilst you do this remember the sweetness of the love that is walking to the cross.

Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> April



On the 24<sup>th</sup> March 1984 Oscar Romero, then Archbishop of El Salvador, was assassinated as he stood at the altar celebrating communion, the consequence of publically criticizing the state's oppressive and violent regime. The gospel reading he read moments before he was shot was the same as we are given for today (John 20:24)

*:"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies it bears much fruit" He*

preached a short homily at that final service in which he said: 'You have just heard in the gospel of Christ that one must not love oneself so much as to avoid getting involved in the risks of life that history demands of us, and that those who try to fend off the danger will lose their lives. But whoever out of love for Christ gives himself to the service of others will live, like the grain of wheat that dies...only in undoing itself does it produce the harvest.' Minutes later he was dead.

This week, as we reflect on Jesus' knowing walk towards his own death, we remember how that act not only transformed our own deaths by grace into life, but since then has inspired countless others to lay down their own lives, or to undergo great sacrifice, in order that others might live. Today why not go for a walk, or look out of your window, and ponder new shoots breaking through the ground. Give thanks for those who live lives of sacrifice for others. Particularly we might think of the medical teams working with a risk to their own health in our hospitals at present. Or those who have committed themselves to free medical care in warzones or places of poverty. There may be people you are personally grateful for. Also reflect upon what things in your life might need to die in order that the new and good can flourish? If you can, plant some seeds today. Or bring into your house the seed heads left from last year. Who would have thought that life could grow from something that looks so lifeless? Remember - with God all things are possible.

### Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> April



Today we reflect on the personal betrayal of Jesus by a friend. In our reading (John 13:21–32) Jesus is sharing a meal with the disciples when he reveals that one of them will betray him. We might imagine the looks bouncing around the room as the group immediately tries to work out who it is. No one dared speak, until Simon Peter (usually the first to open his mouth!) nudges the man beside him...

*'One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining next to him;... he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.'"*

Why didn't Jesus directly accuse Judas, face to face, there and then? Why hand him a piece of bread and whisper privately to the beloved disciple beside him? Was there a risk that the others would have tried to dissuade him, prevent or slow down the inevitable? The beloved disciple was clearly trusted by Jesus. Judas, on the other hand, was not... and yet still Jesus washed his feet and shared a meal with him. He did not object or defend himself, but trusted entirely in the truth that would be our

salvation. We have so much to learn from Jesus' behaviour. We, too, will have been betrayed in our lives, treated unjustly, talked about, the subject of gossip. It hurts, and that pain can linger. Today we might spend some time thinking of how we respond to those who hurt us. What prevents us from acting with dignity, empathy and ultimately forgiveness?

Take a piece of bread and a small bowl with a little oil or melted butter in. Remember the times when you've felt betrayed, and pray as you feel able for healing and peace, for all involved. Dip your bread into the bowl and remember that we have hurt others, and they have hurt us, often unintentionally. Eat and know that – through Christ – we can forgive and be forgiven.

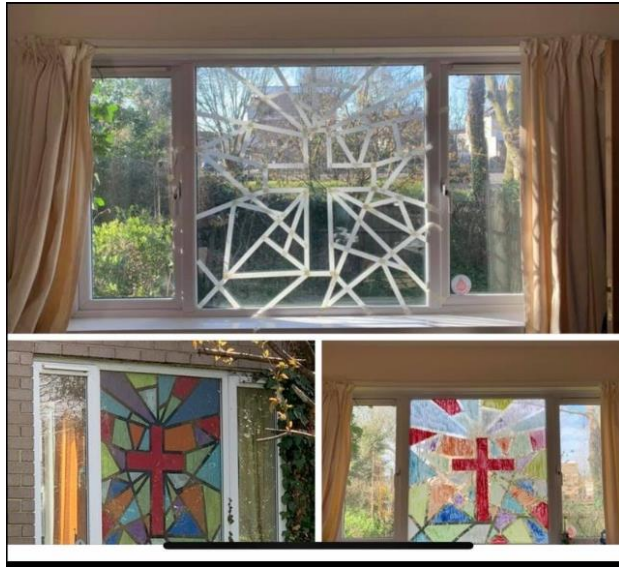
#### **Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> April**



There is so much ritual and symbolism in our traditional services today it is a loss that we are not together. Usually on this morning priests, deacons and readers gather in the cathedral and renew their vows, while large jars of oil are blessed by the bishop and brought back to the parishes to be used for the baptized, the confirmed, the sick and the dying. This evening offers one of our most powerful services, as we recount that final supper of Jesus and feet are washed, bread is broken, wine is poured and the church is dramatically stripped until all that is left is darkness and the presence of Christ. Here we remember him alone in the garden, for that long night, knowing what the dawn will bring. And with him we wait a time, and then we too go to sleep.

It may not be possible to do all of these acts in our homes today but we can focus on a part. Washing hands has become a popular pastime. How do you wash yours? Do you pray, or sing or count? If you live with others then today why not before supper wash each other's feet or hands? Or if you live alone as you wash your hands today reflect that this act, which we have recently been called by others to do is in itself an act of service, even when in isolation. Then light a candle this evening as you eat. Remember, even if we can't share in communion together, Christ still sits at your table. Some of us sleep better than others (!) If you are a person who wakes in the small hours perhaps tonight use that time to pray for others, who like Christ in Gethsemane, fear what lies ahead.

#### **Friday 10<sup>th</sup> April**



In our churches on this day there are different traditions. In some services a large wooden cross is processed and people are called to look upon it, to bow before it and to kiss its wood. At Tewin we often walk the stations of the cross, remembering different parts of the journey Christ trod; his carrying the cross, falling three times, the words he said. At each service music and prayers express the sorrow of this day. The horror of this story of cruelty and betrayal never lessens. But rather

than turn our back, as natural instinct would have us when we are confronted with human suffering, we spend time looking upon this object of torture and death. We do so, of course, because ultimately we know the cross is good, as we have named this day. There have been many words spent explaining the meaning of the cross but ultimately we come back to one. When Jesus is taunted that he has the power to come down off the cross that is true, but it was not nails that held him there but love. Today there are meditations and services that can help you reflect on the radio, television and online. Perhaps you might also like to make your own cross, out of nails, card or wood. Or you may like the idea in this picture to mark this day in your home. Using masking tape you mark out the outline of a cross, as in a stained glass window. Leave it colourless today, but spend time looking through it to the world outside and praying for the world so loved by Christ that he died for it. Tomorrow, in preparation for Easter, you can transform its starkness with water based pens or paint.

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> April**



Holy Saturday is an in between space. Of course we know the end of the story, and so in some ways it is a time of waiting and anticipation. But also, liturgically, it is a space of hopelessness. As far as Jesus' original followers were aware Jesus was dead. All the excitement and hope they had placed in him had come to nothing. We are

not always good with in between spaces. If we have a moment, whether at a bus stop, or waiting in a coffee shop for a friend, we are likely to reach for our phones. We like to fill space, with screens or noise. We might constantly check for updates to the news or social media to distract our minds from that which is around us. We might use the radio as background simply to hide the reality that we are alone. But Holy Saturday asks us to sit for a while in a different space, to acknowledge that which is uncomfortable and to stay with it. So today find a time where you put your phone away. A time where there is no distraction, no radio or music or television. Note how it feels. Do you feel uncomfortable? Do you feel liberated? Use the time to prepare for tomorrow, whether that be cooking, decorating or in anticipatory prayer. If you made a cross window yesterday, now is the time to decorate it. As you do so, think how after the dark of the night, with dawn the cross will be transformed.