

The days are longer and the sun finally has some warmth in it as we begin April with the final week of Lent and Holy Week. The Joy of Easter as we celebrate Christ's victory over death and his glorious resurrection becomes much more powerful when we also share something of what he suffered in those final days of his earthly life. Palm Sunday, 13th April 13, signals the start of what the church calls Holy Week, culminating with an empty tomb and Jesus risen on Easter Sunday. These two Sundays are joyful, unlike the days between them!

Firstly, we remember how the crowds welcomed Jesus as he and his disciples approached Jerusalem for the Jewish Passover, waving palm branches and cheering as Jesus rode past on a donkey. How quickly a happy crowd can turn into a jeering angry mob! When Jesus entered the Temple grounds in Jerusalem, he turned over tables, upsetting stallholders who were making money charging too much for offerings for sacrifice, accusing them of turning God's house into a robbers' den. We read in the Gospels how Jesus celebrated the Passover with his disciples, firstly washing their feet to demonstrate loving service, then instituting what we now know as Holy Communion as he blessed, broke and shared bread (his body) and a cup of wine (his blood), asking his followers to "Do this in remembrance of me."

We read how Judas, one of the twelve, agreed to betray Jesus to the authorities, leading to Jesus' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. The crowds who had recently welcomed the Son of David were quick to shout for his crucifixion at his trial. Jesus, innocent, dies on a cross, a thief on either side suffering the same fate. His body is laid in a tomb, but on the third day, the tomb is empty and Jesus is risen; Easter morning, the greatest Celebration of the Christian year. This year, we will celebrate this first at 6am at the top of Nephote Lane, on Cissbury. All are welcome! Later risers can join us at later Services in our churches ending with Easter egg hunts.

But, only experiencing the joy of Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday leaves a gap ... Do try to join us for something else in the week between as we remember all Jesus has done for us in his Passion, death and resurrection. Stations of the Cross (Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday) encourage us to walk with Jesus to the cross; Maundy Thursday is an opportunity to watch and wait with him in prayer. On Good Friday, after 'Messy' crafts at the Rectory, we walk down the hill to Pond Green with the cross, remembering that Jesus died to free us all from sin and death. The churches are open for private prayer daily and Service times are on our website and at the back of Findon News as usual. New this year, Colin is leading Compline on Good Friday at 7pm in Findon Church. This is a prayerful, quiet, traditional Service, a time to rest in God's presence on this meaningful day.

I look forward to sharing this special season with you as and when you are able to join us.

Every blessing,

Helena