

What is “Holy Week”?

The majority of Christians across the globe refer to the week that begins with Palm Sunday and ends with Easter Sunday, as “Holy Week”. During Holy Week we also observe the Tenebrae Service on Maundy Thursday as well as Good Friday worship. The high light always is the joyous celebration of the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday.

We know that the word “holy” means that something belongs to God. It tells us that this week is set apart for God, to remember, contemplate and celebrate the central truth of the gospel, that only Jesus Christ, the Son of God, saved us from our sins by his atoning death and victorious resurrection.

What is “Palm Sunday”?

Palm Sunday always falls on the Sunday before Easter Sunday. The feast commemorates an event mentioned by all four Gospels (Mark 11:1-11, Matthew 21:1-11, Luke 19:28-44, and John 12:12-19). It remembers the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on the last Sunday before his Passion.

The Gospels go on to describe how Jesus rode into Jerusalem, and how the people there lay down their cloaks in front of him, and also lay down small branches of trees. The people sang part of Psalm 118 - ...*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father, David.* ... (Psalms 118:25-26).

The earliest evidence of Palm Sunday celebrations can be traced back to Jerusalem in the 4th century, according to the travel diary of a woman who had traveled to Jerusalem and observed the festivities - including the procession of believers with palm fronds.

On Palm Sunday music plays an important role in praising Jesus our King, who came to Jerusalem to save his people. He is a King who saved by giving his life - body, soul and spirit - to carry our punishment and deliver us from the law and judgment of God.

What is Tenebrae?

The Tenebrae service is observed on Maundy Thursday, the Thursday before Good Friday. It was on the Thursday night that Jesus instituted the holy Supper, washed the feet of his disciples, experienced the anguish and fear of Gethsemane and was arrested and tried by the Jewish religious leaders. It was the night that he was betrayed by Judas and denied by Peter.

Tenebrae (*Latin for 'shadows' or 'darkness'*) is a unique ceremonial memorial of the suffering of Christ by the gradual extinguishing of candles, a series of Scripture readings, teaching on the meaning of the Passion of Christ and in remembrance of him, sharing in holy Communion.

The purpose of the Tenebrae service is to recreate the emotional aspects of the passion events. It is not to be a happy service, because the occasion remembered is a solemn one in which we are in mourning because our sins caused the Son of Man so much hellish torment and distress.

It is an incomplete service without benediction at the end, only to be completed on Easter Sunday, when our blessing and joy arises from the glorious, victorious resurrection of Christ.

Good Friday

Good Friday is not a day of celebration but of mourning, both for the sins of the world and our personal sin that the death of Christ represents. Yet, although Friday is a solemn time, it is not without its own joy. For while it is important to place the Resurrection against the darkness of Good Friday, likewise the somberness of Good Friday should always be seen with the hope of Resurrection Sunday. We always observe Good Friday well knowing that Sunday is coming! Sunday, every Sunday, remains a feast of worship and praise, because Jesus triumphed over death and all our enemies.

Traditionally we remember the words of Jesus on the cross on Good Friday...

Father, forgive them . . . (Luke 23:34)
This day you will be with me in paradise (Luke 23:43)
Woman, behold your son . . .(John 19:26-27)
My God, my God . . . (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34)
I thirst. (John 19:28)
It is finished! (John 19:30)
Father into your hands . . . (Luke 23:46)

Easter Sunday (Sunday 4 April)

On the 3rd day he rose again!

Easter Sunday is the crown of Christian worship that inspires every Sunday service of the year, where we are equipped to live for the glory of God every day of our lives, until the end!

You could call it “the most important Sunday of the year”. I prefer to call it the most inspiring Sunday worship one can ever celebrate!