
A Holy Week Awaits You

**An article for *The Cathedral Times*
by the Very Rev. Sam Candler, *Dean of the Cathedral***

This holy week of the year, maybe holier than any other, invites us to take a journey of several days. It is not just one sermon that makes Holy Week holy. It is not just one prayer. It is not just one piece of music. Rather, it is the very drama of Jesus's last days on earth that is re-enacted at the Cathedral.

We began this past Sunday, on Palm Sunday. After blessing palm branches in the labyrinth, we paraded up Peachtree Road around the front of the Cathedral, waving the branches and remembering Jesus's entrance into the holy city of Jerusalem. Yes, we treated it like a parade, welcoming and celebrating. Plus, it was actually great fun to walk together around the church! We witnessed the great progress of the Good Faith Chapel! But the Palm Sunday service took a sheer turn once we heard the gospel. On Palm Sunday, the Sunday of the Passion, the entire passion story of Jesus was read as the gospel. We were walking the way of Jesus.

This Thursday, April 17, is Maundy Thursday. The word "Maundy" is derived from a Latin word, "mandatum," meaning "commandment." This is the night, at the Last Supper, when Jesus gives his disciples a "new commandment," that we love one another. As Jesus stooped to wash the feet of his disciples on that night, so we, too, will take the time to wash another person's feet. At the Cathedral, we do not merely stage this re-enactment. We invite folks, voluntarily, during the service, to ask another person if they might wash his or her feet. (Wear clean socks, or no socks, on that night! Someone might ask to wash your feet.) The Maundy Thursday Liturgy continues with a Eucharist that commemorates the Last Supper; then, as the lights are dimmed, clergy and altar guild strip the altar, clearing the way for Good Friday. This is one of the most moving services of the year.

On Good Friday, of course, we solemnly remember the crucifixion itself. Once again, we hear the passion story read in its entirety. Good Friday is one of the only days of the year that we do not celebrate the Eucharist. Instead, the service is highlighted by the passion, by our prayers and petitions, and by the entrance of a large wooden cross at the end of the service. In silence, in music, and in prayers, we venerate the cross on that day.

Holy Saturday is another day that we do not celebrate the Eucharist. The body of Jesus is in the tomb on that day. But the activity around the Cathedral has become almost like a mini-Easter for me and the staff. I am in awe of the great gifts and talents that show up to rehearse and prepare for Easter Day. Musicians, flower guild folks, altar guild folks, acolytes, lectors, vergers, boy scouts (preparing the fire!) and all sorts, gather on Saturday for the great rehearsal. The preparation for Easter can be just as exciting as Easter itself!

Finally, of course, comes Easter Day. Every service is tremendous and overflowing with Easter energy; and we have a service going on at almost any time you arrive! But the grandest service, and the most dramatic, is the one that begins very early on Easter morning, during the dark, and before sunrise. Get up early and join us!

At 6:00 am, on Easter morning, we have lighted the huge Easter fire on the front lawn in the Horseshoe Drive, the place we walked through began seven days earlier. This time, we are completing the drama. We process the Paschal Candle in the dark nave, we sing the ancient and lovely Exultet, we hear the old stories of Creation, of the Red Sea Exodus, and of the Valley of Dry Bones. Then we baptize new Christians into this ancient mystery of creation, redemption, and new life.

Finally on Easter morning, we celebrate the Eucharist itself. The service is beautiful and life-giving, for sure. But Easter morning is really the last chapter of a drama that takes an entire week to complete. Our spirits are rewarded when we participate as fully as we can throughout Holy Week. When we have lived through Palm Sunday and Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, then we are prepared to know Easter in a way we might

never have known Easter before.

Thus, Holy Week is the entire Christian story, lived out in prayer and procession, word and song, cross and sacrament, water and fire. May God gloriously bless us as we celebrate life!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip