



GUILDFORD  
CATHEDRAL

# HOLY WEEK

Walking the Way of the Cross



# THE CATHEDRAL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

## A LETTER FROM THE DEAN

*Dear Friends,*

We have journeyed through Lent together—forty days of prayer, fasting and self-examination. Now we arrive at the most sacred week in the Christian year: Holy Week, the days in which we walk alongside our Lord from his triumphant entry into Jerusalem to the darkness of Calvary and, at last, to the blazing light of Easter morning.

Holy Week is not merely a remembrance of events long past. It is an invitation to enter the story ourselves, to let our hearts be broken open by the depth of Christ's love, and to discover that the path through suffering leads to glory. The Church has always understood that Easter joy is deepest for those who have kept vigil through the darkness. We cannot rush to resurrection without first standing at the foot of the Cross.

This year, we are delighted to welcome The Rev'd Jo Winn-Smith as our Holy Week speaker. Rev'd Jo will guide us through the great themes of these sacred days, helping us to see afresh the mystery at the heart of our faith.

I warmly invite you to make Holy Week a priority. Come to as many services as you are able. Let the ancient liturgies wash over you. Allow yourself to be moved by the beauty of our music and the power of our worship. And on Easter morning, may you know in the depths of your being that Christ is risen indeed.

## THE HISTORY AND IMPORTANCE OF HOLY WEEK

From the earliest days of the Church, Christians have set aside the week before Easter as a time of special observance. By the fourth century, pilgrims to Jerusalem were keeping elaborate liturgies that traced Christ's final days through the very streets and holy places where they had unfolded. These ancient practices shaped the worship of the whole Church, and their echoes resound in our services today.

Holy Week invites us to slow down in a culture that rushes past profound moments. Each day carries its own weight of meaning: the acclamation of Palm Sunday, the gathering shadows of the early week, the stark drama of the Triduum—the three great days of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Eve that form the beating heart of the Christian year.

To keep Holy Week is to acknowledge that faith is not merely intellectual assent but embodied participation. We process with palms, we watch and pray, we venerate the Cross, we sit in darkness until the new fire blazes forth. Our bodies learn what our minds struggle to grasp: that love is stronger than death, that life springs from the tomb.

In an age of distraction, Holy Week offers the counter-cultural gift of sustained attention to what matters most. It is a week to clear the diary, to say no to lesser things, to give God the time and space to work upon our hearts. Those who enter fully into these days find that Easter, when it comes, is not a single morning but a transformation that colours everything.

## THE SACRED TRIDUUM

At the centre of Holy Week stands the Triduum—from the Latin for ‘three days’—the continuous liturgy that begins on Maundy Thursday evening and concludes with Easter Evensong. These three days are not separate services but one great act of worship, a single movement from the Upper Room through Calvary to the empty tomb.

The Triduum is the oldest and most important celebration in the Christian calendar. Long before Christmas was observed, the Church kept these days with fasting, prayer and solemn liturgy. To participate in the Triduum is to join countless generations of Christians who have walked this path before us, and to discover that the story of Christ’s death and resurrection is not history alone but present reality.

We encourage you, if at all possible, to attend all three principal liturgies: the Eucharist of the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday evening, the Good Friday Liturgy, and the Easter Vigil on Saturday night. Together they form a complete whole—a journey that cannot be rushed or abbreviated without losing something essential.

### Tenebrae

On Wednesday of Holy Week, we offer the ancient service of Tenebrae—a word meaning ‘shadows’ or ‘darkness.’ This contemplative liturgy of psalms, readings and music traces the gathering gloom of Christ’s Passion. As the service progresses, candles are extinguished one by one until the cathedral is plunged into darkness, recalling the darkness that covered the land as Jesus hung upon the Cross.

Tenebrae is a service of haunting beauty. There is no sermon; the liturgy speaks for itself. It prepares the heart for the intensity of the Triduum to come.

### Maundy Thursday

The word ‘Maundy’ derives from the Latin *mandatum*—commandment—recalling Jesus’s words to his disciples: ‘A new commandment I give you, that you love one another.’ On this night we remember the Last Supper, when Christ took bread and wine and gave us the Eucharist. We remember too how he washed his disciples’ feet, teaching us that true greatness lies in humble service.

Our Maundy Thursday Eucharist includes the washing of feet, a profound and moving ritual in which we enact Christ’s example. The service concludes with the stripping of the altar—the removal of all decoration from the sanctuary—as we enter the solemn watch of Gethsemane.

### Good Friday

Good Friday is a day unlike any other. The Church gathers not to celebrate but to contemplate—to stand before the Cross and behold the lengths to which God’s love will go. We hear the Passion narrative, we pray for the whole world, and we venerate the Cross itself. We share in the body and blood of Christ, reminiscent of his death on the cross, and looking forward to his resurrection.

Our Good Friday Liturgy is austere and beautiful. The church is bare, the music spare, and yet there is nowhere the presence of God is more palpable. To kneel before the Cross is to know oneself loved beyond all deserving.

### The Easter Vigil

The Easter Vigil is the most ancient and glorious service of the Christian year. It begins in darkness, where the new fire is kindled and the Paschal Candle lit. We process into the darkened church, the light spreading from person to person until the whole building blazes with candlelight.

We hear the great stories of salvation—creation, the flood, the exodus, the prophets—and then, at last, the Easter proclamation rings out: *Alleluia! Christ is risen!* Bells are rung, the organ thunders, and we celebrate the first Eucharist of Easter. If you have never attended an Easter Vigil, this year might be the year to discover this extraordinary liturgy.

### Easter Day

Easter morning dawns on a Church transformed. The fast is over, the alleluias return, and we gather to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord with joy and thanksgiving. The journey of Holy Week finds its completion in the Easter Eucharist—not as an ending but as a beginning, for we are an Easter people and alleluia is our song.

#### Our Holy Week Speaker



We are delighted to welcome **The Rev'd Jo Winn-Smith** as our speaker for Holy Week. Rev'd Jo will deliver addresses on Monday and Tuesday evenings, helping us to enter more deeply into the mystery of these sacred days.

Rev'd Jo brings a wealth of experience in preaching, teaching and spiritual direction, and we are greatly looking forward to her presence among us. Her addresses will offer fresh perspectives on the familiar story of Christ’s Passion, inviting us to encounter the living Lord in new ways.

The addresses take place at 8.30pm on Monday 30 March and Tuesday 31 March, followed by Sung Compline at 9pm. All are warmly welcome.

# HOLY WEEK SERVICES

## PALM SUNDAY

29 MARCH

- 10.30am Palm Sunday Procession and Eucharist
- 6pm Music, Readings and Sermon for Palm Sunday

## MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

30 MARCH

- 5.30pm Evensong
- 8.30pm Address
- 9pm Sung Compline

## TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

31 MARCH

- 8.30am Holy Communion
- 5.30pm Evensong
- 8.30pm Address
- 9pm Sung Compline

## WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

1 APRIL

- 5.30pm Evening Prayer
- 7pm Tenebrae

## MAUNDY THURSDAY

2 APRIL

- 11am Diocesan Chrism Eucharist
- 5.30pm Evening Prayer
- 7pm Eucharist of the Last Supper with foot washing

## GOOD FRIDAY

3 APRIL (BANK HOLIDAY)

- 10am All Age Service
- 12 noon–3pm Devotions
- 1.30pm Good Friday Liturgy
- 5.30pm Evensong

## EASTER EVE

4 APRIL

- 8pm Easter Vigil

## EASTER DAY

5 APRIL

- 8am BCP Holy Communion
- 9.45am Festival Eucharist
- 6pm Festival Evensong

## AN INVITATION

Holy Week asks something of us. It asks us to slow down, to be present, to let the story of Christ's Passion penetrate our defences and touch our hearts. It is not always comfortable—but nothing truly transformative ever is.

The services of Holy Week are among the most beautiful and awe-inspiring in the Church's year. The music, the liturgy, the drama of light and darkness—all combine to create worship that speaks to the deepest places of the human soul. Many who have experienced the full sweep of Holy Week speak of it as life-changing.

I invite you to make a commitment this year. Perhaps you might attend the Triduum in full for the first time. Perhaps you might come to Tenebrae and discover its quiet power. Perhaps you might simply resolve to be present more often than usual, allowing the rhythm of daily worship to shape your week.

Whatever you choose, know that you do not walk alone. The whole community of Guildford Cathedral journeys with you, as does the great company of saints who have kept these days through the ages. And above all, Christ himself walks beside us—the one who entered Jerusalem to the sound of hosannas, who took the cup of suffering for our sake, and who burst the bonds of death on Easter morning.

May your Holy Week be blessed, and may the joy of Easter fill your heart.



**The Very Reverend Bob Cooper**  
Dean of Guildford

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## A PRAYER FOR HOLY WEEK

*Almighty and everlasting God, who in your tender love towards the human race sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ to take upon him our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross: grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility, and also be made partakers of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.*