

The Messenger

April, 2017

From the Priest...

As spring finally makes its way to us,
So also does the great Feast of Resurrection.
In both we observe and celebrate the fulfilled promise of *New Life*.
Each year we grow in anticipation of the return of flowers to the landscape,
Of leaves to the trees, and of lush green to the grass.
As winter's cold temperatures and gray skies linger
Our hope for warmth and color increases dramatically – maybe even drastically.
Any sign of renewal brings greater confidence that life continues.
Likewise, our brushes with the harshest realities of the human experience
Raise in us greater longing for signs of life's most precious expectations.
Just as spring brings optimism about the return of nature's glories,
Likewise, the promise of Easter restores assurance that God sustains life as created.

This year the celebration of Easter is relatively late – not until April 16.
But spring's arrival also seemed delayed.
A rare warmth in much of February teased us and has made it seem
That the real spring weather would almost never come.
But that promise will not fail –
Nor will God's promise to raise us to new life in his presence.
As we recall the teachings and events of Jesus life during Lent,
And especially in the dramatic days of Holy Week (April 9 through 16),
We are mightily reassured once more that Christ endured the pains of life **and** death,
And rose victoriously from the stone-cold tomb.
With that comes the reiteration of the promise meant for us, God's People.
It surely **is** God's design to create life and to renew it to its purpose,
All according to his own time and plan.

So, we anticipate our joyful celebration of that promise fulfilled
At the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord.
Easter Day will be upon us – and we'll be reminded of God's Good News again.
One has to conclude that it is no mere coincidence that these two things,
Spring and Easter, come at the same time.
Both reaffirm life; both exude confidence in the Creator;
And both are powerful statements of God's glorious intent for what he has made.
Celebrate the *spring of souls* **together** with fellow believers,
And be sure to invite friends, family, neighbors – and yes, strangers too –
To join the celebration.

Meanwhile, may Easter's Promise and Peace be with you

Fred

The Celebration of Easter at All Saints'

On April 16 the congregation of All Saints' is gathering to celebrate and give thanks for the **Resurrection of the Lord, Jesus Christ**. We'll rejoice in the Liturgical Festival of the Holy Eucharist. The hymns will sound the note of joy; the readings from Scripture will pronounce the Word of promise fulfilled; the music of organ and voices will proclaim both the message and the rejoicing; the beauty of flowers will declare the signs of life gloriously; and the fellowship of the gathered People of God will be enhanced by the news of life renewed and restored.

All members of the congregation are urged to be present – and more. Make it a time when you take the opportunity to invite that person you have been thinking about **to come along with you**. Consider the possibilities. It might be a neighbor that you've come to know. It could be a nearby friend that you've thought of inviting to come to church with you. Maybe it could be a member of All Saints' that you've not seen for a while. Perhaps it could be some family members who are visiting you for the holiday weekend. And just maybe You can even think of some other possibilities. And it might be helpful to extend the invitation **now** rather than wait until the evening before. It could be meaningful to them just to realize that your invitation was thought through and not just a last minute, spur of the moment notion.

There are **two** chances to worship that day. Services are at **8:00 and 11:00 AM**. Each will celebrate the Resurrection event; each will offer the Lord's Supper; and each will have the opportunity for fellowship and conversation with those who are present. Join us on this very special day. ***It's the place to be!***

The Sunday of the Passion (Palm Sunday)

Holy Week, the six days before Easter, begins with Jesus Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem. It sets in motion one of history's most dramatic series of events leading to the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ. These days are set apart by the Liturgy to be observed and contemplated.

The very day of Jesus arrival is traditionally called ***Palm Sunday***. It is so named because his arrival is hailed by adoring crowds greeting him along the roadway with praises fit for a king. As a sign of their welcome they strew branches of palm trees along the way and cheer the one they assume will be their conquering hero. Their expectations are fueled by the stories of his miraculous deeds and by their longed-for fulfillment of the Prophets of Israel who wrote of a King that would come to save them.

The crowd is destined to be disappointed because what Jesus has come to conquer is not their besieged political system. Rather, he has come to save them from the destructive power of their own disobedience and sin. The disappointment instantly turned to hostility and easily gave in to Roman forces. The deal was sealed. All that was needed was a plan that would palm off the blame and deny the responsibility and it would be a go. Back and forth the prisoner would go; first one authority, then another; one of them even washed his hands. This day of a parade replete with palm branches and "hosannas" turned into chaos. But the festivities were fun while they lasted.

In keeping with the Liturgical tradition, we'll bless, distribute and process the palms. Worship will begin outside at the entrance to the church (weather permitting). That will remind us once again of the drama of that day. But we'll also focus on the Passion that is to come. The story of Jesus' last days according to **Matthew 26:14--27:66** will be the Gospel Reading for that Sunday. **Worship is at 8:00 and 11:00 AM.**

Maundy Thursday (April 13)

Thursday in Holy Week is a reminder of the “Last Supper,” the night just before Jesus’ arrest when he and the disciples gathered around the table to remember the Passover. In that meal he gave new meaning to God’s plan for salvation as he broke bread and shared the wine instituting the “Lord’s Supper.” For Christians that has become *a new Passover* as the blood of Jesus, not that of sacrificed lambs, became the way by which the People of God were freed from their slavery to sin and death. At that meal Jesus gave his followers a new Command, that is, **to love one another**. The day liturgically has been named **Maundy Thursday**. The word “Maundy” is from *mandatum* (which means “command”).

The early Christians very soon began to recall that important occasion by gathering around their tables and sharing that same act together. It has continued as the practice of the Church ever since. The act is known by various names, each one seeming to emphasize something specific about the meaning of the meal. It’s often called the Lord’s Supper – pointing to Jesus as the host. Sometimes it’s referred to as Holy Communion – placing the emphasis on being *with* Jesus and fellow believers. It is also called Holy Eucharist – from the word that literally means “thanksgiving.” Jesus took the bread and wine and blessed them with “thanksgiving.” Worshipers receive the body and blood and their promises of forgiveness with “thanksgiving.”

Maundy Thursday will be observed at All Saints’ (April 13) at **7:30 PM**, when we come together as a church family for **The Holy Eucharist**.

Good Friday (April 14)

The day of Jesus’ crucifixion is clearly the most solemn day of all for Christians. Strangely, it is known as **Good Friday**. It’s ironic that something so evil can be called “good.” But, in spite of its wickedness and cruelty, it is good precisely because it is the means by which God has accomplished the salvation of humankind. Jesus’ death in all its horror is **for us and for our salvation**. And that act reached its conclusion and climax when Jesus rose from his tomb in defiance of death.

Worship at All Saints’ on Good Friday remembers that loving act of God in a special and symbolic way. We’ll gather at **7:30 PM** in the church and use a liturgical order of worship known as ***Tenebrae***. That word means “shadows” and the service is one that literally and symbolically demonstrates *shadows*. The day of Jesus’ death is reported to have engulfed the world in darkness. The liturgy of ***Tenebrae*** moves from light to darkness. It consists of readings and prayers that recount the crucifixion. After each reading one candle is extinguished and the lights in the church are dimmed slightly. The final reading, the actual moment of death, brings total darkness and the crash of thunder. It is a rather brief and simple time of worship, but it is most important and it is meaningful.

We must always remember that **the only way** to Easter and Resurrection is **through** death and a tomb. It is important that Jesus’ followers be present for **both**.



Lectionary Readings for April, 2017

April 2 Fifth Sunday in Lent

Ezekiel 37:1-14 The dry bones of Israel brought to life.

Psalms 130 I wait for you, O LORD; in your word is my hope.

Romans 8:6-11 Life in the Spirit.

John 11:1-45 The raising of Lazarus.

April 9 Lent VI Sunday of the Passion, Palm Sunday

Isaiah 50:4-9a The servant of the Lord submits to suffering.

Psalms 31:9-16 Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

Philippians 2:5-11 Humbled to the point of death on a cross.

Matthew 26:14--27:66 The passion of the Lord.

April 13 Maundy Thursday

Exodus 12:1-14 The passover of the Lord.

Psalms 116:1-2, 12-19 I will lift the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 Proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

John 13:1-17, 31b-35 The service of Christ: footwashing and meal.

April 14 Good Friday

John 18:1--19:42 The passion and death of Christ.

April 16 Easter Day, The Resurrection of Our Lord

Acts 10:34-43 God raised Jesus on the third day.

Psalms 118:1-2, 14-24 This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Colossians 3:1-4 Raised with Christ to seek the higher things.

Matthew 28:1-10 Proclaim the resurrection.

April 23 Second Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:14a, 22-32 Christ's resurrection: the fulfillment of God's promise to David.

Psalms 16 In your presence there is fullness of joy.

1 Peter 1:3-9 New birth to a living hope through the resurrection.

John 20:19-31 Beholding the wounds of the risen Christ.

April 30 Third Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:14a, 36-41 Receiving God's promise through baptism.

Psalms 116:1-4, 12-19 I will call on the name of the Lord.

1 Peter 1:17-23 Born anew through the living Word of God.

Luke 24:13-35 Eating with the risen Christ.

Hymn Notes for April

Let's talk about a song you've been singing all your life.

How such a simple bit of poetry can raise in us such hard questions! For sure, it was clearly never intended to be complicated; in fact, quite the contrary. This and other powerful songs like it, called "Spirituals" actually derive their character precisely from their simplicity. But that makes it ever so much more soul searching, doesn't it?

Sing these straight forward words to the elementary, yet hauntingly emotional melody, and soon we've been plunged headlong into a deeply spiritual experience. Now add to that a shared experience of having sung this song around a campfire, then there is also the bonus of memory.

Clearly this is not Bach, Beethoven or Ralph Vaughn Williams. It's not even Watts or one of the Wesleys, nor should it be. Who would ever have thought that such an unadorned ballad could be so powerful and penetrating? But surely it is! There's actually something scriptural about these "Spirituals" as literature, something more than the narratives they recount. There's a distinct parallel in their transmission. Much like the biblical texts of old, these songs of a people were passed on for a long time by simple oral tradition. Little was done to "write down" these precious African American songs until after the Civil War, when the first recognized effort was in 1867 with the publication of *Slave Songs of the United States*.

In the 1870s the Jubilee Singers of Fisk University were quite successful in bringing these poignant songs to the public both in America and in Europe. But "Were you there?" wasn't noticed until even later. It was not seen in print until 1899, when published in Boston in *Old Plantation Hymns*.

It is the feeling imparted by these songs that transports us. Maybe this is part of the reason why:

"Were you there?" speaks so intimately of the tree. That unquestionably imaged Jesus' passion directly to those who had witnessed the lynchings, of their own fathers and brothers, uncles and cousins. Scholars suggest that "Spirituals" are the only truly authentic American hymnody. Likely true, even though there have been, and continue to be, some wonderful hymnists who are Americans. That's ironic, to say the least, when you consider that that designation would never have been contemplated by the songs' creators. This all too rare joining of story-telling, empathy and ardor is a blend in which the proclamation of the Gospel can rejoice; a gift of the Spirit which reminds us vividly that our God speaks powerfully in ways which often astound and mystify us.

Even the first question of this song is hard. It's the one about self. As eager as we so often are to be at the center of any focus, we're strangely comfortable attempting to de-personalize Crucifixion. It's scary even to think about having been there. For one thing, that's not something anyone normally wants to witness. We're quite relieved to be well on this side of that historical moment. Wouldn't you just hate to have to admit having been there? Maybe you'd never be able to shake the thought that somehow you might have been able to stop it. That's haunting.

There is a ray of hope in an altered version of the song that wasn't there in the published original.

It does raise the issues about how they pierced his side, how the sun refused to shine -emotion that are nothing less than cosmic. But the other version, surely appropriate for the Christian, wants to invite us to the joy and to Be there for the rising too. And we should. So among other things this hymn does well, it makes it clear that we can't have one without the other. If we're going to be there for the celebration (at least in the most profound sense), then we need also to be there for the grim agonies too.

Were you there? Hard question, to be sure. At least we can say that through the few brief moments of this hymn, we've had a very powerful glimpse of what it must have been like.

Birthdays this Month of April

April 4 **Cathy Howard Long**

April 12 **Ruthie Gregory**

April 13 **Scott Barber**

April 22 **Cathy Scott**

April 25 **Joanne Parrott**

April 27 **Kelly Barber**
Charles Tillery

As God is the Creator and Giver of life, we celebrate with those who rejoice in their birthdays. And together we pray that God will bless them with joy and peace, and remind them daily of his presence and his gifts of grace. May each of their birthdays be very special.

Easter Lily Sale to Support Handbell Program Expansion

As many of you know, it is a tradition at All Saints' Church to adorn the altar and sanctuary with Easter Lilies for our Easter Services. This year, when you purchase a lily to help beautify our church, you will also support our Handbell Program. The Handbell Program, under the direction of Danita Barnes, is anxious to expand.

Proceeds from the lily sale will go toward the purchase of new bell equipment.

The lilies will be sold for \$15.00 apiece, and must be ordered in advance by Monday, April; 10. If you would like to purchase one or more of the flowers, please complete the form and mail it, along with your check, to the Parish Office by Monday, April 10. Thank you in advance for your support of the Handbell Program and the beautification of the church. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Danita or any member of the Handbell Choir.

LILY PURCHASE FORM

PLEASE MAIL THIS FORM, ALONG WITH A CHECK, TO THE PARISH OFFICE BY MONDAY, April 10, 2017

635 Hamilton Street, Roanoke Rapids, NC 27870

Name:

I will purchase _____ lily(s) for \$15.00 each. Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Person(s) giving the Lily.

Complete this section for publication in the service bulletins:

This lily is given to the glory of God and in memory of, in honor of, and/or in thanksgiving for.
in memory of:

Print the name of the person (s) you are remembering.
in honor of: _____

Print the name of the person (s) you are honoring.
in thanksgiving for:

Print the person's name or event for which you are offering thanksgiving.

All Saints Episcopal Church

635 Hamilton Street

Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina 27870

Parish Office 252-537-3610

allsaintsrr@gmail.com

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