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## Words of Encouragement 20210331

Words to encourage you as we look to the next three days...

**The Three Days (Triduum in Latin)** are the three days of Holy Week which focus intensely on Christ's passage from death to life: Maundy Thursday evening through Easter evening.

### Historical Background

The keeping of **The Three Days** has its roots in springtime rituals and in the Jewish celebration of the Passover. The Jewish people observed the passage from winter to spring by slaughtering a lamb and sharing a meal. This meal reminds us of the saving power of God. Thankfulness became a focus for having survived winter and being freed from slavery.

Christians joined in with this practice by the observing of the death and resurrection of another lamb, Christ, the Lamb of God. The date for this observation coincided with the Jewish Passover.

In the second and third centuries, this festival grew. Pascha (from the Greek, meaning "passage," as in Christ's passage from death to new life) became not only linked to the Passover as described in Exodus, but also the to waters of Baptism. This became a special time of baptism for both individuals and families.

This time which began as a Jewish celebration of the Passover became an annual celebration of the Resurrection. By the fourth century these three days became a traditional observance.

After a period of preparation, Christians were welcomed into the church through baptism at the Vigil of Easter. Overtime the keeping of the three days was less and less. In the 20th century, a renewal of this feast we started.

### Current Practice

Some Lutheran congregations have an established practice of keeping *The Three Days* while others have only begun to learn about the practice. ELW (Evangelical Lutheran Worship) is the first Lutheran worship book to include the service. (LBW included this in the Ministers Desk Edition only). Introducing The Three Days into an

assembly's life takes careful planning and preparation as well as education, especially because the involvement of congregational members in leading, music, reading, art, and other roles greatly enriches the keeping of The Three Days. See the [Worship Guidebook for Lent and the Three Days](#) for additional insights, images, and practical tips to help deepen your congregation's worship life during the days from Ash Wednesday to Easter.



So you see, these next three days are very important tradition for many Christians including Lutherans. Our ***Living Lutheran*** magazine lifted up the importance of these three days in an April 5, 2013 article.

### **Maundy Thursday**

The term “Maundy” comes from the Latin “mandatum;” it is from a verb that means “to give” or “to order” — commanded. After Jesus and the disciples finished the Last Supper and walked toward Gethsemane, Jesus taught them a new commandment – *“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another”* (John 13:34)

### **The Last Supper**

On the first Maundy Thursday, after they had eaten, Jesus gave the disciples his body and blood together with the bread and wine for the forgiveness of their sins. This is called Holy Communion or the Eucharist, and Lutherans believe this to be one of two sacraments - gifts from God. Lutherans commemorate this day at worship by sharing in the meal of Holy Communion.

Only in the Gospel of John do we hear a remarkable event mentioned at the Last Supper. That is, an act of humility when Jesus performs the duty of a slave by washing the feet of the disciples and urging them to do the same for one another. Very often practiced, especially with small groups, foot washing sometimes takes place on Maundy Thursday at worship.

### **Stripping of the altar**

After the Eucharist, or Holy Communion is celebrated, it is customary in Lutheran churches to “strip the altar.” This stripping of the altar symbolizes the abandonment of Jesus by his disciples and the stripping of Jesus by the soldiers before his crucifixion. As we consider the humiliation of Jesus and the consequences of sin, we prepare to celebrate new life. Psalm 22 is often read as the paraments are being removed.

## **Good Friday**

As we worship on Good Friday, you may remember that no vestments or permits are used on this day.

### **The stations of the cross**

The stations of the cross is the devotional practice that consists of 14 stations, each one standing for an event that occurred in the passion of our Lord Jesus.

### **The seven last words of Jesus**

These are the phrases spoken by Christ during the time of his crucifixion. We find these sayings in the Gospels and they reveal the divinity of Jesus as well as his humanity.

#### **THE FIRST WORD**

“Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do.”

#### **THE SECOND WORD**

“Today you will be with me in paradise.”

#### **THE THIRD WORD**

“Woman, behold your son! Son, behold your mother.”

#### **THE FOURTH WORD**

“ My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

#### **THE FIFTH WORD**

“ I thirst.”

#### **THE SIXTH WORD**

“ it is finished.”

#### **THE SEVENTH WORD**

“Father, into your Hands I commit my Spirit.”

### **‘Tre Ore’**

Latin for “three hours,” “tre ore” refers to the time that Christ was on the cross— 12:00-3:00 p.m. While there is no specific ritual, this service sometimes centers on a series of homilies about the 7 last words of Christ, including hymns and periods of silent meditation on the stations of the cross.

## **Tenebrae** (Latin for “shadows” or “darkness”)

Tenebrae is usually held the evening of Good Friday and includes the gradual dimming of the lights and extinguishing of candles. The Christ candle is removed from the sanctuary in a concluding “Strepitus” or loud noise (slamming of the Bible) symbolizes the earthquake in agony of creation at the death of Christ.

## **Visual of Easter**

White is a liturgical color used on this night

## **Service of Light**

The Easter vigil begins outside of the church building where a new Paschal candle is blessed. This sometimes happens around a fire with the congregants singing, ***Were You There***. Worshipers are reminded of the connection between the Passover of ancient Israel and the new Passover, which is Christ’s victory over sin and death.

## **Alleluia!**

The alleluia is used for the first time since the beginning of Lent.

## **Baptism and affirmation of baptism**

During a service of new beginnings, new brothers and sisters in Christ our baptized and new members are received through confirmation or the profession of faith.

## **Vigil readings**

In the read “Evangelical Lutheran Worship” book there are 12 Old Testament readings that are appointed for the service, which recount the acts of salvation throughout history. Some of the readings may be omitted leaving for that should not be excluded—*The story of creation, the deliverance at the Red Sea, salvation freely offered from Isaiah, and Daniel’s deliverance from the fiery furnace.*

These and other spiritual practices have been important for Christians throughout history. What might be some of the traditions that you have experienced with your family and/or your worshiping community? Are there practices you might be interested in learning more about? As we consider these three days ultimately we are looking toward Easter and the celebration of the risen Christ.