

Holy Week at Home

This is a resource created by St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

<https://www.stpaulsfay.org/> We give thanks for their willingness to share it with the wider church.

Introduction

Holy Week and, in particular, the Paschal Triduum of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday, are the climax of the Christian year. They are our annual pilgrimage by which we return to the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This year, because of the novel coronavirus, we must make that pilgrimage in our homes instead of together in church.

At St. Paul's, we will be live-streaming our services throughout Holy Week. You may participate in those worship services through our Facebook page and our YouTube channel, both of which can be reached from our homepage: stpaulsfay.org.

This resource is designed to help you make your paschal pilgrimage at home. For much of Christian history, the home was the primary place of prayer and worship. This year, we have an opportunity to restore that tradition and make our journey through Holy Week authentic even if we are physically distant from each other. We hope this resource will help you draw closer to God during these holy days.

Before Holy Week

Sacred Space at Home

Each of us has sacred objects that reflect our faith and contribute to our spiritual practice. Creating a sacred space at home by gathering such items and curating a home altar provides us a place for daily prayer, which can help us to center, focus, and stay connected. This practice is meaningful at any time but especially in this time where we are spending so much time in our homes.

Preparing this space is an activity for everyone in the household to do together. Each individual will have meaningful objects to contribute and might use the space throughout the day on their own. The whole household might also gather around the home altar for daily prayer together and to celebrate Holy Week and Easter together using the home practices offered in this resource.

Creating Your Home Altar

Start by finding a surface which you can transform into a home altar. A low-traffic but highly visible location will work well--perhaps a side table, a windowsill, or an open shelf.

Next, take a stroll around your home. Notice which items and belongings spark joy and gratitude. What belongings help you feel connected with God and your neighbors? Gather up these things and bring them to your newly designated prayer space.

Some items you might gather:

- **Cloth:** a placemat, tablecloth, a scarf, or any piece of fabric. You might try to match the color of our liturgical calendar: purple for Lent, red and black for Holy Week, and white for Easter.
- **Bible:** a family or personal Bible. If you don't have one, draw or print out an image of the Bible.
- **Candle:** either wax or battery operated.
- **Cross:** any shape, type, or media. If you don't have a cross, you could make one from found objects.
- **Icon:** a holy image of a saint, biblical figure, or a beautiful piece of art. You could go online and print an image that is meaningful to you.
- **Other Holy Texts:** a Book of Common Prayer, other prayer resources, poetry, or religious texts. You might copy a favorite prayer onto a card to display.
- **Objects from Nature:** a stone, a shell, or anything that brings you joy.
- **Water:** a bowl, cup, or small jar of water to remind you of your Baptism
- **Greenery and Flowers:** During Lent and Holy Week it is traditional to have sparse greenery. Come Easter spring flowers will be a lovely addition marking this special day.
- **Paper and Pen:** a prayer journal or way to write down and offer prayers.

Palm Sunday

On Saturday, you are invited to come by the church and retrieve palms from the narthex. Bring them to your home and place them on your home altar. If you are using a cloth on the altar change the color from purple to red. If you cannot come to the church, cut a leafy branch from your yard and do the same.

Materials: palm or other leafy branches, Bible

- Hand everyone a branch from your home altar.
- Read: Matthew 21:1-11
- Pray: *We praise you, Almighty God, for the acts of love by which you have redeemed us through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. On this day he entered the holy city of Jerusalem in triumph, and was proclaimed as King of kings by those who spread their garments and branches of palm along his way. Let these branches be for us signs of his*

victory, and grant that we who bear them in his name may ever hail him as our King, and follow him in the way that leads to eternal life; who lives and reigns in glory with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.

Monday, Tuesday, & Wednesday in Holy Week

Materials: Bible

- Read the lesson for each day:
 - Monday: John 12:1-11
 - Tuesday: John 12:20-36
 - Wednesday: John 13:21-32
- Pray: *Almighty and everliving God, in your tender love for the human race you sent your Son our Savior Jesus Christ to take upon him our nature, and to suffer death upon the cross, giving us the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant that we may walk in the way of his suffering, and also share in his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Maundy Thursday

Ceremonial Hand Washing

Jesus washed the feet of his friends as an act of love, service, and preparation. On Maundy Thursday, we traditionally wash each other's feet as part of our worship to remind us of Jesus' offering and servant leadership. This ritual hand washing reframes our typical antiseptic, self-protective routine and reminds us of Jesus' command to care for the vulnerable.

Materials: Bible, sink, soap, towel

- Read: John 13:1-17, 31b-35
- Pray: *We begin by washing, as we were washed in our baptism. We cleanse our hands as we were cleansed in the waters of new birth. We do this not because we are afraid, but because we were commanded to love, and to cleanse our hands, and gather in spirit, is how we love the vulnerable, whom Jesus loved. May we be instruments of love. May the sacrifices we make be for the good of our human family near and far. Amen.*
- Each person present then washes the hands of someone else with soap and warm water as a sign of humble service. If there is only one person present, that person may wash their own hands, calling to mind someone else for whom that gesture is offered.

Stripping of the Altar

Removing all ornaments and symbols from the altar is an ancient custom of the Church. We mark the way Christ's life was stripped from him by stripping the altar of all signs of life and beauty during a special service. This almost-bare worship space reminds us of the bareness of life without the hope of Christ that we have through His resurrection. This beautiful and powerful ceremony can also be practiced in the home, as our homes also bear signs and symbols of our faith.

Materials: Bible or Book of Common Prayer, storage box or bin, dark cloth

- Read: Psalm 63:1-8 (from your Bible or the Book of Common Prayer, p. 670-71)
- Go out throughout the house to gather all sacred objects and religious symbols that can be easily moved for example: crosses, icons, statues, candles, and prayer beads. Work silently as a sign of respect for the task. Pack these items away in the storage box.
- Use a dark cloth to drape any other items that are too large or permanent to pack away.
- Finally, veil or remove all of the items from your home altar. Leave the space bare until Easter morning when you will return the sacred objects to their rightful place on the altar or in the home.

Good Friday

The Solemn Collects

On Good Friday, Christians pray for the needs of the whole world, lifting them to God through the One who hung on the cross. Because of God's great mercy, we believe that God receives our prayers and answers them in love.

Materials: Book of Common Prayer, paper, writing or coloring utensils

- Read: Psalm 22:1-21 (from the Book of Common Prayer, p. 610-11)
- Pray the Solemn Collects (from the Book of Common Prayer, p. 277-80)
- In the silence after each collect, write or draw the people, places, or situations you hold in prayer, and place them on your home altar.

Veneration of the Cross

Part of our worship on Good Friday includes the veneration of the cross. During this practice, we focus our sight on the cross and think of the suffering, love, and hope that it represents. We spend time in prayer before the cross. Some people like to express their veneration by approaching the cross one by one to offer a gesture of respect for all that it represents. This gesture typically includes kneeling or bowing before and then kissing the cross.

- Retrieve a cross from where you stored it yesterday or create a cross out of found objects in your home and place it on your home altar.
- Find a seat with the cross in view or kneel before your sacred space. Spend some time in silent prayer.
- Pray: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, we pray you to set your passion, cross, and death between your judgment and our souls, now and in the hour of our death. Give mercy and grace to the living; pardon and rest to the dead; to your holy Church peace and concord; and to us sinners everlasting life and glory; for with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and reign, one God, now and for ever. Amen.*

Easter Vigil

Prepare a Paschal Candle

In churches, a new Paschal Candle is lit either at the Great Vigil of Easter or on Easter morning. It represents Christ and the light that his resurrection brings to the world. Traditionally, the candle is lit and placed in a prominent place near the altar, where it remains lit from Easter until the end of the Easter season. Creating a Paschal candle for your home altar invites Christ into your home. The light reminds us that we welcome Jesus who joins us even in the most simple of daily activities.

Materials: candle, permanent marker, wax paper, tape, 5 tacks or pins

- Either write directly on the candle using a permanent marker or tape a strip of wax paper around the candle to write on.
- Follow the steps below to prepare the candle, the end result will resemble this image:
 - Draw the vertical arm of the cross on the candle as you say: *Christ yesterday, and today.*
 - Draw the horizontal arm of the cross on the candle as you say: *Christ, the beginning and the end.*
 - Draw the Alpha above the cross on the candle as you say: *Christ, the Alpha*
 - Draw the Omega below the cross on the candle as you say: *And the Omega.*
 - Draw the first number in the upper left corner of the cross on the candle as you say: *All of time belongs to Christ.*
 - Draw the second number, in the upper right-hand corner of the cross as you say: *And all the ages.*
 - Draw the third number, in the lower left-hand corner of the cross as you say: *To Christ be glory and power.*



- Draw the fourth number, in the lower right-hand corner of the cross as you say:
Through every age and forever. Amen.
- Place the nails (tacks or pins) in the cross, saying:
 - (Top of the cross) *By His holy*
 - (Middle of the cross) *and glorious wounds*
 - (Bottom of the cross) *may Christ our Lord*
 - (Left of the cross) *guard us*
 - (Right of the cross) *and keep us. Amen.*
- Place the candle on your home altar in preparation for the Easter Vigil.
- When the darkness of evening comes, gather round and light the candle.
- Pray: *Almighty God, who gloriously raised your only-begotten Son from the dead: sanctify this fire, that it may be a sign of life and hope; may we, who celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, be set aflame with love, and renewed in faith, so that we may shine as a light in the world, and glorify you in our lives; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*
- Light the candle during times of prayer, special events, and meals and repeat the words, "Come Jesus, come." This is a tactile way to remind ourselves to seek Christ daily.

New Fire

A fire is kindled at the opening of the Easter Vigil service. This typically begins in darkness and the new fire is kindled before any part of the service is spoken. A prayer of blessing is then said over the new fire before it is used to light the Paschal candle. As fire is a source of warmth and light, the new fire of the Easter Vigil represents the victory in Christ of light and life over darkness and death. The Paschal candle, lighted with the new fire, symbolizes the risen Christ.

Materials: wood, kindling, paper, or candle, firepit, fireplace, or grill

- Gather in silence at sunset.
- Set and light a fire.
- Pray: *O God, through your Son you have bestowed upon your people the brightness of your light: Sanctify this new fire, and grant that in this Paschal feast we may so burn with heavenly desires, that with pure minds we may attain to the festival of everlasting light; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*
- Light your Paschal candle and carry it as it burns to your home altar.

Easter Day

Get up early enough to watch the sun rise. Gather flowers from your garden or bring together other signs of life and place them on your home altar. Change the colors adorning your altar to

white and replace the sacred objects that you put away on Maundy Thursday. Step onto your front stoop or porch and proclaim an alleluia aloud for neighbors to hear.

Go and Tell

The Easter Gospel story commands - go and tell that Jesus has Risen. Christ has defeated death. We too are bearers of this Good News.

Materials: phone, paper, pen, envelope, stamp

- Gather around the home altar.
- Read: John 20:1-18 and Matthew 28:1-10
- Call or write a letter to a family member, friend, or fellow church member and wish them a happy Easter. Share with them what Jesus and the resurrection means to you in your life.

Sources:

Book of Common Prayer

<https://buildfaith.org/holy-week-at-home-family-practices-for-the-triduum/>

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<https://buildfaith.org/easter-sunrise-at-home/>

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Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, Liturgy of Light

<https://www.scotland.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/Easter-Vigil.pdf>