

The Christian Church embarks upon the Holiest Week of the Year

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Next week is Holy Week in the Church. It is the most important week of the entire Church Year. It begins tomorrow with Palm Sunday, when the Church celebrates the triumphal entry of her Lord, Jesus Christ, into Jerusalem to fulfill His salvific mission. Jesus rides into the city on a donkey and the assembled crowds welcome Him with praise, shouting out, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” Five days later, another crowd will be assembled before Jesus with quite a different message emanating from their lips. “Crucify Him!” will be their cry.

The pilgrims were right to hail Jesus as their Messianic King when He entered Jerusalem for that final and fateful week. “Hosanna” means “save us, now,” and that is exactly what Jesus entered the city to do. He enters Jerusalem to save us, not by leading a revolt and overtaking His enemies by force, as most expected Him to do, but rather by giving Himself into the hands of the authorities and laying down His life in the place of all sinners on the cross.

Holy Week is the most important week of the Church Year because this is the week when we most fully meditate upon the mysterious and glorious work our Lord did in our place and on our behalf. This is the week when the reason for our celebration at Christmas finds its fulfillment, for the Baby born in Bethlehem came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and became man precisely to do what He does during Holy Week—to suffer and die on the cross to save us, and to rise from the tomb on the third day to open for us the way to eternal life.

The whole world should stop everything during this week and take time to meditate upon its holy events. But, the whole world won't do that. This will just be another week for the world. Businesses will not close; sporting events will not be put on hold; the television will not cease broadcasting its shows, and so on. The world will march through this week without giving its holy nature a second thought.

This is to be expected, of course. The world wants nothing to do with Christ and His salvation. There is nothing holy about this week in the eyes of the unbelieving world. But, who would expect Christians to allow this week to come and go without embracing its holy nature? Indeed, how could Christians possibly let this week just pass them by? It seems unthinkable, and yet, this is exactly what many Christians do. They pay the holiest week of the year little attention, if any—and that is very, very sad.

For many Christians, Holy Week has been reduced to showing up for Church on Easter Sunday. While all Christians should most definitely be in Church on Easter Sunday, Holy Week is much more than that. Celebrating our Lord's resurrection from the dead is rather hollow if that celebration is not preceded by contemplation and meditation upon His sufferings and death. There is no Easter Sunday without Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. The resurrection of our Lord from the dead provides the validation of the victory our Lord won over sin, death, and the devil on the Cross. The work of our salvation is completed in full on Good Friday. Our Lord's resurrection from the dead on Easter

Sunday simply supplies us with the proof that such is the case. His resurrection is the Father's stamp of approval upon the work He did to save us by living the perfect, sinless life in our place, and by dying on the cross to suffer the full penalty we deserve for all of our sins.

Do not let this holiest of weeks pass you by, dear Christians. Get yourself to as many Holy Week Services as you can. At the very least, consider attending your congregation's Maundy Thursday and Good Friday Services. Doing so will make your celebration of our Lord's resurrection on Easter Sunday much more meaningful, I promise. And, if you are currently without a church home, you are more than welcome to join us during Holy Week. At Peace Lutheran, we will begin each day of Holy Week by praying Matins at 7:00 a.m. Divine Service will be held daily at Noon and 7:00 p.m. (Noon and 7:30 p.m. on Good Friday). On Holy Saturday, Divine Service will be held at 10:00 a.m. and Easter Vigil will be celebrated at 8:00 p.m. And, finally, on Easter Sunday, we will have a Sunrise Service at 7:00 a.m. and the Festival of Our Lord's Resurrection at 9:30 a.m., with Easter breakfast served in between.

Next week is the holiest week of the Church Year. Will Christians recognize it as such, or will they let it pass them by as the world does? I pray that the former will be the case with you. In Jesus' holy and precious Name. Amen.

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