

March Team St John, St Mary, St Peter, St Wendreda
Passion Sunday 5th in Lent , March 22nd 2026

Regular Church Services

St Peter's Sundays 8am & 11am; Wednesdays 10am

St Mary's Sundays 9.15am; St Wendreda's Sundays 11am

St John's Sundays 9.30am; Tuesdays 10am

Fridays in Lent Stations of the Cross 12noon St Peter's

Stainer's Crucifixion 6pm Choral Service at St Peter's

All Welcome

Meditation

Today's Gospel is Matthew's account of Jesus before Pilate, and we had His appearance before the High Priest two weeks ago. But Luke records a third trial, before Herod, but gives us few details. I wonder.....

Herod sits on his throne. A hangover has put him in a foul mood. As Caiaphas rattles off a string of accusations against Jesus, Herod curses himself for having mixed wine and beer in such large amounts the night before. For any reason other than Jesus, Herod would have sent the delegation away. The High Priest's complaints are tiresome and predictable. Herod motions him silent. "Bring in your prisoner," Herod says with a groan. "I'm quite familiar with all your complaints." Too familiar by far. It was all these rabbis did, complain. Unhappy unless everyone else shared their misery, parasitic, fools, Herod thinks. As he waits, Herod eases his throat by drinking red wine from a goblet, hoping that alcohol will set his blood coursing at this early hour.

The guards escort Jesus to the throne. Herod is not impressed by the man's size or looks. *This* is the famous prophet who has stirred up so much trouble? "Well," Herod finally says, hiding his initial disappointment, "I've been wanting to see you for some time," he continues in a friendly tone, "I have heard of your exploits for years. The miracle healings, stories about fish and loaves and feeding the thousands. Truly amazing. I actually sent soldiers out looking for you. But not to harm you..... despite what you may have heard about John the Baptist and his unfortunate death. After all, he never performed a single miracle....." All this talk scratches Herod's throat. He drinks deeply from a goblet and sighs, "Would you grace us with a miracle? Right now? Nothing spectacular. It's early, and I wouldn't want to tax you too much on my behalf."

Caiaphas and the other Jews watch with dread – they fear a miracle. Herod and his soldiers crave new entertainment – they hope for a miracle. As for Jesus, he merely closes his eyes, as if lost in deep thought. "Come on," cajoles Herod, "These great religious leaders want you dead. Give us one miracle, and you will be released." Jesus opens his eyes. Herod sees pity in that gaze. Pity for Herod. It bothers him that Jesus realises he can find no enjoyment in life. "Listen," Herod snaps, "I am offering you freedom. Show me a sign from God, and I'll bow down before you...and Him. One miracle is all I need. Turn a sword into a snake, or a ploughshare. or make the ropes fall from your wrists. I'll let you go." Jesus only smiles sadly.

Caiaphas clears his throat. "Noble Tetrarch, there is a good reason why he will not perform any miracles. He cannot. He is a hoax. A false prophet. You are well within your rights to have him stoned." "Don't tell me what my rights are." Herod focusses his irritation on the chief priest. "Word of this failure to perform a miracle will get to the people. They will stop following him. He doesn't need to be dead to lose his power." Unspoken - and both of them know it – is Herod's legitimate fear of stirring up more trouble by killing another popular prophet. John the Baptist brought trouble enough. "The Sanhedrin has found him guilty," Caiaphas says, "surely that..." "Take him back to Pilate. Continue the trial with him where you left off." "Pilate?" Caiaphas is surprised. And worried. Pilate already refused to condemn Jesus. "Surely you cannot mean that?" "Silence! Push me farther and I will acquit this man immediately." Caiaphas almost protests but thinks better of it as Herod carefully holds his goblet to step down from the throne and approach Jesus. "If you can't perform a miracle, talk," Herod says, "Give us one of your famed parables." Jesus' steady, silent gaze has strength that Herod cannot understand. Herod's usual insecurities arise and this angers him. "Obviously you are too good for us," Herod says sarcastically. He removes his elegant robe and drapes it over Jesus' shoulders. "Guards," Herod calls, "your king! Worship him. Then take him to Pilate." Herod's guards pounce on the opportunity for crude sport. They blow trumpets in Jesus' ears. They drop to their knees in front of him with mock bows. They taunt him with vulgar comments about his ancestry. Not once does Jesus show any sign of discomfort. He is so dignified, the laughter begins to die.

"Enough!" Herod says, finding the victory empty. "On your way." The guards begin to push Jesus forward. "Wait!" Herod calls. The procession stops. "This water," Herod says, holding the goblet high, "turn it into wine!" Herod shakes the goblet as if a great force were taking hold of it. Seconds later, with the goblet a few inches above his mouth so that everyone could see

the red contents, he pours the remainder of it into his mouth. “Look, look,” Herod laughs, “the water has become wine. A miracle!”

Moments later, when all are gone, Herod leans against the throne in defeat. Fat and wheezing, weary of exploring every luxury and sin with less satisfaction every passing year, he does not feel like a king. Why, with everything a man could ask for, does he feel there is so little to make life worthwhile? How he had hoped to believe.

Prayers - Station of the Cross

XII. Jesus dies on the Cross.

Naked on the Cross,

**he gazed at those whose fists were raised in anger,
until he could see no more.**

**There, in the late afternoon, with head bowed, body and spirit exhausted,
he ceased to struggle. It was done.**

*“The glorious cross of the Risen Lord is the tree of my salvation;
I eat its fruit, and in it I rejoice: in its roots I grow, in its branches I lie down.
Its dew makes me glad, its breeze refreshes me; in its shadow I pitch my tent.*

*The cross of the Risen One is my nourishment in anger,
a spring of water to satisfy my thirst, clothing over my nakedness.
When I am threatened, it is my defence. When I stumble it supports me.*

In victory it is my crown, in struggle it is my reward.

O tree of eternal salvation, O pillar of the universe,

*O scaffolding of the world: your top touches the skies,
and in your open arms, the love of God shines.*

**Lord, how are we to understand those hours late on a Friday?
How can we share the emptiness of those who walked with you,
seeing you now defeated, hung between thieves?**

**So this was where all the hours and days
of walking and talking finally ended.**

Defeat on a Hill – and a satisfied crowd – Finished.

XIII. Jesus is taken down from the cross.

Lifeless, his savaged body lay, once again,

in the caring arms of his mother

Journey over. Task complete.

Failure in the sight of men.

*Lord Christ, we have done away with you on an unjust charge, we have
buried you among the wicked. Yet you have carried the sins of many, and
interceded for sinners. Now because you gave yourself up to death, you have
gained whole peoples as a prize. You, Lord, redeemed our evil with your
goodness, you transmuted the curse which lay heavily on the earth into
abounding blessing. Give, Lord, the gift of your death so that we may enter
into your endless life.*

**Lord, the final act of your friends
was to accept your lifeless body for burial.**

Accept, Lord, our failures, our mistakes and our careless ways.

Bury them, Lord, with the suffering of your cross.

XIV. Jesus is laid in the tomb.

Burial did not take long.

**Laying him out nearby (before the last light and the coming Festival)
covering him with a cloth.**

‘It is time we were gone.’

Turning into the dusk they left him.

*Lord of all hopes and freedom, like the grain of wheat you fell and died for
the life of us all. When our hopes fall, give us courage, Risen Lord. When we
feel cut off, bring us back to the newness of life.*

Lord, it is over, the way of the cross has been walked.

The story has been told and prophecy fulfilled.

‘What now?’

They must have said to one another as they walked into the chill night air.

LENT ACTIVITIES – *Last Week*

Fridays 12noon St Peter's Stations of the Cross
followed by simple lunch in the Rectory

Lent Courses

Tuesdays 11-12 St John's "Psalms"

Wednesdays 7.30-9 St Peter's "Psalms"

Tuesdays 7pm St John's Chosen Video continues

On-line Fridays 3pm contact Jenny "Difference"

This years's Lent Charity is Water Aid

Thanks to Jenny and all who supported the
Water Aid Lent Appeal Coffee Morning

*"Art Cafe returns this Lent starting Thursdays 11am
Via Dolorosa. Contact Rev Jane Rees. All welcome*

Future Dates

Sun 29th Mar 2.30pm Civic Service St Peter's

Thu 2nd Apr Craft Fair at St John's

Sun 12th April Choral Evensong St John's 4pm

Sun 19th Apr Confirmation at St Peter's 4pm

Sat 18th Apr St Mary's Coffee Morning at Sue's

Sat 18th Apr Brass Concert at St Peter's 7.30pm

Sun 26th Apr Lions at St Peter's for St G fair

Sat 28th Mar St Peter's Easter Fair 9.30-11.30am

Posters to distribute. Help needed, see list

Easter chocolates/sweets needed for Raffle Prizes

HOLY WEEK SERVICES

Palm Sunday 29th March – *Services at usual times*

Remember to alter your clocks.

Monday 30th March 10am Communion at St Mary's

Tuesday 31st March 10am Communion at St John's

Wednesday 1st April 10am Communion at St Peter's

7pm Taize Service at St Peter's

MAUNDY THURSDAY 2nd April

7pm at St Peter's;

Communion of Last Supper with Footwashing and Vigil

GOOD FRIDAY 3rd April

10am St Peter's

12 Noon Churches Together in Broad St

1-3pm Messy Church at St John's

1pm zoom service – contact Rev Jenny

2pm St Mary's

7pm St John's

HOLY SATURDAY 4th April

7pm St John's Ceremonies and First Communion

Easter Sunday 5th April – *Services at usual times*

Bishop Dagmar's farewell 4pm 3rd May cathedral

Bishop Sarah's welcome 3pm 21st June cathedral

Church Annual Meetings

St John's Thursday 16th April 7pm in Church

St Peter's Sunday 19th April after 11am service

St Mary's 7.30pm Tuesday 28th April in Church

Churchwardens, PCC NOMINATION FORMS at back

Nominations for other church officers also needed

ANNUAL REPORTS hopefully available

If you worship regularly and are not yet on the

ELECTORAL ROLL, please fill in form.

Harrier Angels featuring St Wendreda's

BBC Radio 4 March 29th – Palm Sunday 7.15pm, repeat
uesday 31st March 11.00pm. then on BBC Sounds

Welcome to St John the Evangelist,

St Peter & St Mary Churches

in the March Team

Passion Sunday

5th in Lent, March 22nd

TODAY Stainer's Crucifixion
6pm Choral Service at St Peter's
All Welcome

Regular Sunday Services

St John 9.30am Sung Communion

First Sunday of each Month 9.30am Wholeness

Service with Laying on of Hands

MESSY CHURCH 1-3pm Next Good Friday

St Mary 9.15am Traditional Sung Communion

St Peter 8am Holy Communion

11am Sung Communion

Last Sunday Sunday Club 11am

TUESDAY St John's; 10am Holy Communion
WEDNESDAY St Peter's; 10am Holy Communion
Zoom services Sunday 5.15pm Team Service
Thursday 8.30am Morning Prayer

Team Rector: Rev Andrew Smith 01354 572117
andrew.marchurch@gmail.com

*All enquiries about Weddings Baptisms etc to Andrew
Baptisms; 12.30 St Peter; 2pm or later St John St Mary*

Team Leader in Mission Ruth Clay 07905950849

RevRuth.marchchurches@outlook.com

Clergy; Jane Rees 463284, Anthony Chandler 652894,
Jenny Webb 07957919510 Mother Jane Dicker 661099

Readers; Hannah Taylor 661712, Stewart Piper

Next Sunday, March 29th, PALM SUNDAY
Matthew 21 v1-11, Philippians 2 v5-11, Mt Passion
2.30pm March Town Civic Service – All Welcome
REMEMBER TO ALTER YOUR CLOCKS

FUNERALS

Thu 26th 12noon St Peter's; Maureen Hull
Thu 9th April 11am St Peter's; Marion Sutcliffe
Tues 14th April St John's; 2pm Gerald Hibbitt
Please sign lists to read the parts in the
Passion Gospel on Palm Sunday, 29th March

St Mary's Church Lunch

Today SUNDAY 12.30pm 22nd March

Middle Fen Farm, 257 Whittlesey Rd, PE15 0AL.

£15 each. Please book 07971 153 164 (Liz).

Articles for next **WINDOWS** magazine to Alan
<allan.whyte@yahoo.com> by 27th March please

*Welcome to Richard Blackmore, ReaderLLM in training
on placement with us over this Holy Week and Easter .*

Prayer, Collect, for this week

Most gracious Jesus, our Lord and our God, who bore our sins in your body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness, have mercy on us, now and at the hour of death; and grant us, with all your people who now recall your saving passion, a holy and peaceful life in this world, and, through your grace, eternal glory in the life to come, where, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, you are alive and reign, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Old Testament; Isaiah 65 v8 -17

Thus says the Lord: As the wine is found in the cluster, and they say, "Do not destroy it, for there is a blessing in it," so I will do for my servants' sake, and not destroy them all. I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, and from Judah inheritors of my mountains; my chosen shall inherit it, and my servants shall settle there. Sharon shall become a pasture for flocks, and the Valley of Achor a place for herds to lie down, for my people who have sought me. But you who forsake the Lord, who forget my holy mountain, who set a table for Fortune and fill cups of mixed wine for Destiny; I will destine you to the sword, and all of you shall bow down to the slaughter; because, when I called, you did not answer, when I spoke, you did not listen, but you did what was evil in my sight, and chose what I did not delight in. Therefore thus says the Lord God: My servants shall eat, but you shall be hungry; my servants shall drink, but you shall be thirsty; my servants shall rejoice, but you shall be put to shame; my servants shall sing for gladness of heart, but you shall cry out for pain of heart, and shall wail for anguish of spirit. You shall leave your name to my chosen to use as a curse, and the Lord God will put you to death; but to his servants he will give a different name.

Then whoever invokes a blessing in the land shall bless by the God of faithfulness, and whoever takes an oath in the land shall swear by the God of faithfulness; because the former troubles are forgotten and are hidden from my sight. For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.

St John's Church Regular Activities

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday

9.15-11.15 St John's Tots;

Tuesday

10am Midweek Communion Service

2nd Study Group 11-12 **see Lent Groups**

Study Group 7pm-8.30pm; Film The Chosen

Wednesdays Community Hub in Hall 12-2

Thursday 1st Thursday Social Group (see below)

Friday Choir Practice in Church

First Thursday visit to the deer farm on 7th May 7pm.

Regular Church Activities at St Peter's

Tuesday

10am-12noon Knit and Natter;

1st St Peter's MU 2.30-4pm 3rd Deanery MU

Wednesday

10am Midweek Communion Service

1st Study Group 7.30-9pm **see Lent Groups**

2nd Wed Christian Aid Lunch Hall 12-1pm

Gospel of St Matthew 27 v11-31

Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You say so." But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?" But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed. Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas. So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him." Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" All of them said, "Let him be crucified!" Then he asked, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!" So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." Then the people as a whole answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

Prayer after Communion

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, you were led out to the pain of the cross for the salvation of the world; by the virtue of your saving passion blot out our sins and bring us to the glory of your eternal joy, for you are alive and reign, God, now and forever. **Amen.**