

Easter services and The Triduum

Next Sunday is Palm Sunday 29th March, (9.30 a.m. Offham, 11.00 Plumpton) when we commemorate the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.

Easter is also called Pascha, from the Jewish feast of Passover, when the Jews celebrated their liberation by God from Egypt, in the Exodus. The word signifies a journey – a passing over. But Jesus filled the Jewish Passover with new meaning. For Christians it celebrates not just the freeing of one people from slavery but the whole human race from its slavery to sin and death. God has delivered us through Jesus' death and resurrection.

But we do not just remember that, through worship we enter it and share in it ourselves! We too pass with Christ from sin and death to the new life of his kingdom. That is why Alleluia is the song of Easter.

On Maundy Thursday, we begin the three days (The Triduum) of the observance of the Passion of Jesus Christ. Three acts of worship: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Vigil on Saturday, each of which form one complete service. We gather on Maundy Thursday, and the Dismissal and Blessing happen at the end of the first Eucharist of Easter at the Easter Vigil.

By immersing ourselves purposefully in the words of these three days we follow Christ from the intimate supper on Thursday, the betrayal and arrest, to the awfulness of crucifixion on Friday, the utter desolation of the following day, until we gather in the dark and light the Easter Candle – hear the ancient 'Exsultet' acclamation of the conquering of darkness and evil and the proclamation of the Resurrection. We then celebrate the first Eucharist of Easter and at last, the Dismissal with the Blessing of God.

Maundy Thursday 2nd April 8.00 p.m. - combined service at St Peter Offham)

We remind ourselves of Jesus' new commandment of love (mandatum novum, hence 'Maundy'). We hear Jesus institute the sharing of bread and wine (the Eucharist) We follow Jesus to the agony of Gethsemane, betrayal and the night of trial. Bread from the communion is carried to the 'Altar of Repose' symbolising Jesus' handing over and trial.

The altar and hangings are stripped away and a time of watching in darkened church is observed. We may stay for a time – "Could you not watch with me...". We move into darkness, there is no formal ending, like the disciples we 'scatter' into the night leaving in silence.

Good Friday 3rd April 10.00 a.m. St Peter Offham, 11.00 All Saints Plumpton

We enter in silence, the cross is venerated, we: hear the account of the Passion. We receive Holy Communion, bread only, from the sacrament consecrated the evening before. There is no benediction, the service ends in silence.

Holy Saturday 4th April

Easter Saturday should be a day of quiet reflection on the burial of Jesus and his descent to the dead, a day of waiting at the tomb for the coming resurrection. In the early evening we observe the Vigil.

The Easter Vigil 4th April 7.30 p.m. - combined service at All Saints

The Easter Vigil is a drama of light and dark. The Pascal candle is lit from a new fire, and everyone's candles are lit. We hear the 'Exsultet' the ancient song of praise. The Gloria is heard for the first time for many weeks – to great acclaim and rejoicing - bring bells, saucepan lids! - anything that makes a noise! We renew our baptismal vows. We share in the Eucharist, and at last, at the end ask and receive the Dismissal and Blessing of God marking the close of the three-day journey with Christ.

Easter Day 9.30 a.m. St Peter Offham 11.00 a.m. All Saints Plumpton Green A joyful service with Eucharist