

We have now entered the most Holy Week of the Church's year. Our time of preparation and reflection during Lent will be tested as we journey with Jesus this week through the solemnity, anguish, and kaleidoscope of human emotion reflected in the events of Holy Week.

We, in the church, mark this week in many ways.

- Meditation on the Stations of the Cross is one traditional aspect of this week. In the Eucharists held each day this week we will reflect on images of the Stations of the Cross and on Jesus' words and actions.
- The service of *Tenebrae* (literally, *of the shadows*) is an ancient service, which has a number of different forms. We will hold a vigil in the *Tenebrae* tradition following the Maundy Thursday Eucharist. Interspersed with long periods of silent prayer and meditation, the story of the passion is read, with candles being extinguished during the service.

There is also an opportunity to share in a more traditional *Tenebrae* service at Christ Church, South Yarra on Good Friday at 5pm. In this service, readings from the Hebrew Scriptures and early Christian Fathers are accompanied by the singing of the *Tenebrae* Responsories of Tomas Luis de Victoria, sections of the Tallis Lamentations, Allegri's *Miserere*, and the gradual extinguishing of candles on a stand called a hearse.

The last candle is hidden beneath the altar, ending the service in total darkness. The *strepitus* (Latin for "great noise"), made by slamming a book shut, banging a hymnal or breviary against the pew, or stomping on the floor, symbolizes the earthquake that followed Christ's death, although it may have originated simply as a signal to depart. Following the great noise, the candle which had been hidden from view is returned to the top of the hearse, signifying the return of Christ to the world with the Resurrection, and all depart in silence.

- The Liturgy of the Cross, at 10am on Good Friday, includes a time of Veneration of the Cross. This is a practice which dates back to at least the 7<sup>th</sup> century in Rome. Adoration or veneration of an image or representation of Christ's cross does not mean that we actually adore the material image, but rather what it represents. In kneeling before the cross and kissing it or touching it, we are paying the highest honor to our Lord's cross as the instrument of our salvation. Because the Cross is inseparable from the sacrifice, in reverencing the Cross we, in effect, adore Christ. Thus we affirm: 'We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee because by Thy Holy Cross Thou has Redeemed the World.'

The mystery of Holy Week is that the true kingship of Jesus is revealed by the cross. It is this kingship—the greatness and glory that is revealed in suffering and death—that Holy Week and Easter bring into focus. In our worship in the coming week, we are invited to enter in spirit the city of Herod and Pilate, the city of the high priests and of Jesus; to walk with Jesus along the Way of Suffering—the *Via Dolorosa*—to the cross; to see him take up the cross and in his strength take up our own; to see him die, knowing that it is this death that has won for us new life.

May all the Saints walk with you this on your journey through this most Holy Week...

*Sam*