

## **ORUCC Confirmation At-Home Holy Week Reflection**



Holy Week begins this Sunday, March 24<sup>th</sup> with Palm Sunday. This is the day that we remember Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The people welcomed him as a ruler, whom they thought would free them from the Roman oppressors who occupied their land. Throughout the week that follows, the services of the church welcome us to participate in the story of the days leading up to Jesus' death. These include Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

Maundy Thursday commemorates the Passover meal that Jesus shared with his disciples the night before he was betrayed. Passover is a sacred Jewish holiday that remembers the ancient Exodus story from the Old Testament, when God rescued the Hebrew people who were enslaved in Egypt. This story of God's salvation is the backdrop for Jesus' own act of salvation for all of creation through his own death and resurrection.

Maundy Thursday is when Jesus instructed his followers to share in a meal "in remembrance" of him—the practice that would become Holy Communion, also known as the Lord's Supper, or Eucharist. On Maundy Thursday, some Christian traditions also remember the story when Jesus washed his disciples' feet, and commanded them to "Love one another." The next day, Good Friday, is the time when the church remembers how Jesus was betrayed and unjustly put to death on the cross.

These stories are sad and often hard to read. Yet it is important to know the whole story of Jesus. To fully appreciate the joy of the resurrection on Easter Sunday, we must first acknowledge the death, destruction, and bondage represented in the rest of the Holy Week stories. Our lives are full of painful, sad and difficult things, and the Christian story has space to hold it all.

This week, I encourage you to do a few things to engage with Holy Week. If you are in town, come to church! On Sunday 3/24 we will celebrate Palm Sunday. Some of you may have signed up for Maundy Thursday dinners in church members' homes on 3/28. On Friday 3/29 at 7:00 p.m., there will be a Tenebrae service at ORUCC. "Tenebrae" means "darkness" in Latin; a time when the story of Jesus' death is read as candles are extinguished into darkness.

You are also invited to read the stories of Holy Week in the Bible. You can find these stories in the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). Each gospel tells the story in a little different way. You could look these passages up in a Bible, or use [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com) to search for them.

- Matthew chapters 26-27
- Mark chapters 14-15
- Luke chapters 22-23
- John chapters 18-19

Please also listen to this [podcast](#), *Strange New World: “Jesus, Wendell and Henri, Part Six: Holy Week,”* which describes Holy Week as “the greatest work of art in Christian history.”



In the beginning of this episode, the host Matthew Myer Boulton describes artist Henri Matisse’s final masterpiece “The Chapel of the Rosary”. If you’d like to see images of this, check out this [website](#).

After listening to this podcast, please consider these questions. You could write your responses in a journal, or if you listened to this podcast with someone, have a conversation:

- What does it mean to think about Holy Week as a “work of art”? How might this image help us think about Holy Week in a helpful way?
- What was new information for you in this podcast? What caught your interest or attention? Is there anything you’d like to learn more about?
- The host Boulton says, “God has a deeper, more abiding form of liberation in mind. Liberation from *sin*—provided we understand “sin” not merely as guilt or doing bad things, but as hindrance, shackles, captivity. Whatever is holding us back individually and as a community, from being the children of God, in the image of God that God creates us to be.”
  - What does this mean to you? What does it mean to be “in the image of God”?
  - Is there anything holding you back right now?