



'Easter: A Festival of love'

A set of prayer resources for the Beacon Parishes Mission Community

This year as we celebrate Easter in our own homes and in difficult times we will still celebrate the great festival of God's love. From sundown on Maundy Thursday to sundown on Easter Sunday we celebrate the great mystery of God's love in the person of Jesus. These three days are known as the triduum.

1. On **Maundy Thursday** we celebrate how Jesus loved his disciples to the end, stopping at nothing for love. Jesus gives himself in a meal and in washing his disciples' feet.
2. On **Good Friday** we celebrate Jesus' faithfulness in the light of human fickleness. A faithfulness that took him to the cross.

In the cross Jesus did all to overcome human weakness and reconcile us to God.

3. On **Easter Eve** we celebrate that God could not wait to share his love and dispel fear. Jesus is risen at night.
4. On **Easter Day** we begin our celebration of the mystery of Easter a celebration that lasts 50 days. We celebrate that in Jesus' resurrection darkness becomes light, death becomes life, sacrifice becomes love.

God's love is hard to believe, this was true for the first disciples as it is for us, we too must see and then come to believe.

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1 How to pray with this resource

What follows is a simple set of resources to help you make the journey of these three days in your own home. For each day there is a prayer, gospel reading, poem and suggested activity.

1.1 Reading scripture prayerfully

As you read the gospel of the day you may want to use the following practice.

Listening for Christ the Word

- Reading:* read the passage slowly noting the word or phrase that attracts you
- Silence:* for two minutes reflect on the word or phrase that has attracted you
- Pray:* speak to God about what you have heard

How Christ the Word Speaks to me

- Second Reading:* read the passage slowly again
- Silence:* for two minutes reflect on how does the content of the passage touch my life today?
- Pray:* speak to God about what you see or hear in the passage

What Christ the Word is inviting me to do

- Third Reading:* read the passage slowly again
- Silence:* for two minutes reflect on 'I believe God wants me to.....today'.
- Pray:* speak to God about your answer to the above

You may wish to keep a journal of your prayers and reflections

1.2 Prayerfully reflecting at the end of each day

In a time of quiet think back over the day.

Give thanks for the gifts you've received. Simple things – smell of fresh coffee; a good night's sleep; a smile from a friend. Ask God to help you in this examen, to be present with you as you reflect.

Think back over how you have spent the last 24 hours – where you have been, who you have interacted with, what you have done - notice the details, the context of what happened and how you acted. Notice especially your feelings and motivations, those things that cause you to act in freedom, or with less than perfect freedom,

First question of examen:

In what moment did you feel most connection with God, with yourself, with others?

Stay with that moment, giving thanks for it, recognising God's presence with you.... What was it that made it so special?... What might God be saying to you through that moment?... How can you make space for more of this in your life?... What opportunity does this moment give you to grow in faith, in love and in hope?



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Second question of the examen:

In what moment did you feel most disharmony or least connection to God, to yourself, to others?

Stay with that moment, although it may not be comfortable. Recognise God's presence with you in that moment... What was it that made it difficult?... What might God be saying to you through that moment?... How do you need to respond to that moment?... What opportunity does this moment give you to grow in faith, in love and in hope?

Final step to reconcile and resolve

Talk to God about what you have just received and ask him to help you in responding.

Again you may wish to keep a journal of your prayers and reflections.

2 Maundy Thursday

God our Father,
you have invited us to share in the supper
which your Son gave to his Church
to proclaim his death until he comes:
may he nourish us by his presence,
and unite us in his love;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Gospel Reading: *John 13.1-15*

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it round his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped round him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterwards you will understand." Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you." For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."

When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.



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The Banquet of Love by Myrtle Hall

Lord today is Maundy Thursday,
the day when you drew your friends together
to the banquet of love.
You gave yourself to them.
I marvel Lord -
you wrapped a towel around your waste,
bent down
and washed their feet
You broke the bread
poured wine
and offered them
all you had to give
Your very self.
Today, you invite us to come
to let you bow down and cleanse the parts of us that most need healing.
You invite us to taste
and drink of your very self
you ask us to go out into tomorrow
to dare to bend low
and serve our brothers and sisters
To give of ourselves
that your healing,
Life giving Thursday love
May flow out into the world -
till thy kingdom come.

Activities:

Spend some extra time over your evening meal, maybe light a candle, say grace.. - and afterwards share your experience and thoughts by phoning or Skyping/Facetiming/WatsApping a loved one.

Sometime during the evening read the gospel of the watch Matthew 26: 30-end and then spend some time in silent prayer watching and waiting.

Keep us, O Lord,
while we tarry on this earth,
in a serious seeking after you
and in an affectionate walking with you,
everyday of our lives;
that when you come
we maybe found not hiding our talent,
nor serving the flesh,
nor yet asleep with our lamp unfurnished,
but waiting and longing for our Lord,
our glorious God for ever.



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3 Good Friday

Eternal God,
in the cross of Jesus
we see the cost of our sin
and the depth of your love:
in humble hope and fear
may we place at his feet
all that we have and all that we are,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

Gospel Reading: *John 19.1-42*

Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. They came up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands. Pilate went out again and said to them, "See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him." So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!" When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God." When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid. He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. So Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin."

From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar." So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgement seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." So he delivered him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews', but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfil the Scripture which says,

"They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots."

So the soldiers did these things, but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom



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he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfil the Scripture), "I thirst." A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished", and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken." And again another Scripture says, "They will look on him whom they have pierced."

After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

Poem by Christina Rossetti

Am I a stone, and not a sheep,
That I can stand, O Christ, beneath Thy cross,
To number drop by drop Thy blood's slow loss,
And yet not weep?
Not so those women loved
Who with exceeding grief lamented Thee;
Not so fallen Peter weeping bitterly;
Not so the thief was moved;
Not so the Sun and Moon
Which hid their faces in a starless sky,
A horror of great darkness at broad noon –
I, only I.
Yet give not o'er,
But seek Thy sheep, true Shepherd of the flock;
Greater than Moses, turn and look once more
And smite a rock.



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Activities:

Go for a walk alone with a cross in your hand or pocket (if you don't have a cross a nail or stick), hold it as you go and pause occasionally to think of Christ's journey to the cross. If you are self-isolating this might simply be by going into each room of your house and pausing or walking slowly around a room. As you pause you might pray the following...

**We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

At 3pm read Psalm 22 slowly and meditatively

Almighty Father,
look with mercy on your family
for which our Lord Jesus Christ was content to be betrayed
and given up into the hands of sinners
and to suffer death upon the cross;
who is alive and glorified with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.
Amen



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4 Easter Eve - Holy Saturday

Eternal God,
who made this most holy night
to shine with the brightness of your one true light,
set us aflame with the fire of your love,
and bring us to the radiance of your heavenly glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen

Gospel Reading: *Matthew 28.1-10*

Now after the Sabbath, towards the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.
Amen.



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T. S. Eliot, from "East Coker", The Four Quartets

I said to my mind, be still,
and wait without hope
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing;
wait without love
For love would be love of the wrong thing;
yet there is faith
But the faith
and the hope
and the love
are all in the waiting.
Wait without thought,
for you are not ready for thought:
So the darkness shall be light,
and the stillness the dancing

Activities:

In the evening sit in a room without any light - light a candle and notice how it gently illuminates the room. Jesus' light comes even whilst it is dark and at night.

Blessed are you sovereign God of all,
to you be glory and praise for ever!
In the darkness of this passing age,
the saints proclaim the glory of your kingdom
revealed among us in Christ, our light.
Open our eyes to behold your presence
and join our song with those of the saints
in praise of all your marvellous deeds,
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Blessed be God for ever

If you want to do more in the evening why not keep a simple vigil and read the unfolding account of God's dealing with his people?

Genesis 1. 1-2.4a

Exodus 14. 10 - end; 15. 20-21

Ezekiel 36. 24.28

Romans 6. 3-11

Matthew 28. 1-10

Keeping vigil:

Start with a prayer maybe the Our Father and ask God to be with you then for each Reading read it slowly, keep some silence and then say a prayer (your own or the Our Father).

Conclude your time with the Grace: The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ the love of God and fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. Amen.



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5 Easter Day

Lord of all life and power,
who through the mighty resurrection of your Son
overcame the old order of sin and death
to make all things new in him:
grant that we, being dead to sin
and alive to you in Jesus Christ,
may reign with him in glory;
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit
be praise and honour, glory and might,
now and in all eternity.
Amen

First reading: Acts 10. 34-43

Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

Second Reading: Colossians 3: 1-4

So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

Gospel Reading: John 20.1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at



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the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Easter, by George Herbert

Rise heart; thy Lord is risen. Sing his praise
Without delays,
Who takes thee by the hand, that thou likewise
With him mayst rise:
That, as his death calcined thee to dust,
His life may make thee gold, and much more, just.

Awake, my lute, and struggle for thy part
With all thy art.
The crosse taught all wood to resound his name,
Who bore the same.
His stretched sinews taught all strings, what key
Is best to celebrate this most high day.

Consort both heart and lute, and twist a song
Pleasant and long:
Or, since all musick is but three parts vied
And multiplied,
O let thy blessed Spirit bear a part,
And make up our defects with his sweet art.

I got me flowers to straw thy way;
I got me boughs off many a tree:
But thou wast up by break of day,
And brought'st thy sweets along with thee.

The Sunne arising in the East,
Though he give light, and th' East perfume;
If they should offer to contest
With thy arising, they presume.

Can there be any day but this,
Though many sunnes to shine endeavour?
We count three hundred, but we misse:
There is but one, and that one ever



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Activities:

Find a spring flower in the garden or a hedgerow, or a picture of one and contemplate its life and beauty. Maybe send a picture of it to a friend.

Spend some time today doing a creative activity you love. This is your light and gift from God, his resurrection life in you - cooking, painting, music, art, writing, gardening.