



Pascha Week – Bible Study

But He was **wounded** for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities...(Isaiah 53:5)

Palm Sunday

Today is the start of this amazing week that changed the world! Over the next week, we will be summarising the events of each day, and contemplating with the early Church Fathers about these events.

The main event that we celebrate today is, of course, Christ's glorious entrance into Jerusalem. Did you notice what the crowds started yelling out? "Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: " **Hosanna** to the Son of David! ' Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' **Hosanna** in the highest!"(Matt 21:9). What does this word "Hosanna" mean? Why did they say it then? And why does the church say it now as we sing the Palm Sunday hymns? Let's ask St Augustine (paraphrased for simplicity).



At that time, when people applied to the King for help, or to address their problems, they used the word "Hosanna". It means "Save now!" or "Save, we beg you!" So for them to say "Hosanna" to Christ means that they saw Him as the King! And they looked to Him for help with their troubles. St Augustine
So as we sing Hosanna in the Highest, with the people of Jerusalem, beg the Lord to save you! Acknowledge He is your King. Give every aspect of your life over to Him. Put your worries at His feet. Don't just sing for the sake of singing! Sing prayerfully!

Monday

There are two key events that happen today – the cursing of the fig tree and the cleansing of the temple.

I don't know about you, but Jesus cleansing the temple is something I don't really understand. Is this really our gentle Lord, who is so loving and caring and patient? Is it our Lord who “When He had made a whip of **cords**, He drove them all out of the **temple**, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. (John 2:15)” Doesn't sound like Him at all! Why did He do it? And what does it mean for me? Let's ask St John Cassian.



When a doctor for the sake of health cuts or burns something that is harmful, it is considered evil by those who have to bear it. But let's read St. Paul's explanation:
⁷ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? (Hebrews 12: 7)''

Basically what St John is saying is that the Jews (and us) were doing something wrong. Jesus then, as a loving Father, couldn't just stand there and do nothing about it! He chastens (or disciplines) us just as an earthly father does with his son. When God allows bad things to happen, don't think He has left you – actually it is the opposite. He sees you as His son/daughter and doesn't want to leave you walking in the wrong direction! It hurts Him to see you suffer, but it will hurt Him more if He just leaves you!

Tuesday

The main thing Jesus does on Tuesday is walk by the fig tree that He cursed yesterday – and it is completely withered away! However the focus today is not on what He **does**, but what He **says**. What were the main things He talked about with His disciples? The signs of the second coming and reminding the disciples (and us) to focus on the Kingdom of Heaven!

Today Christ uses many parables to teach His disciples. One of them is the parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins (Please go read it in Matt 25:1-13). What does the oil represent? Why didn't the wise virgins lend some to their foolish counterparts? Where did the foolish virgins go to buy some oil? Where can we get some? Let's ask St. John Chrysostom!

Many of the Church Fathers, including St John Chrysostom, St Gregory the Great and St Augustine explain that the lamps and oil represent good deeds and giving to the poor. St John Chrysostom further explains "we should constantly seek the poor for such oil before it is too late."

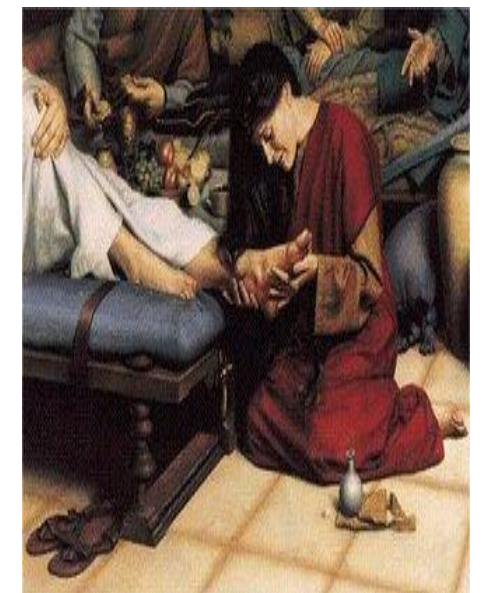
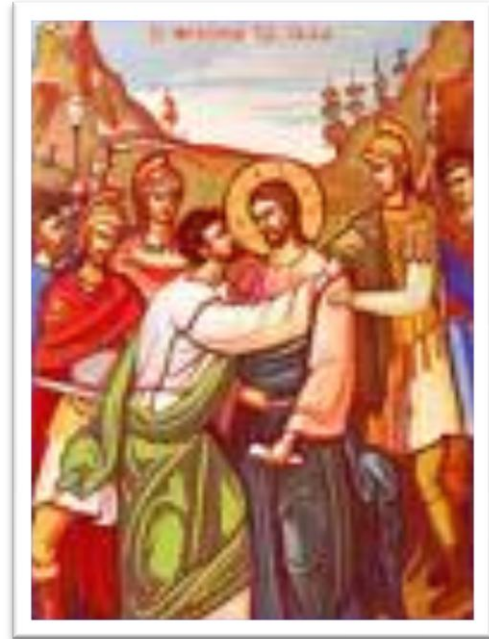
So the reason the foolish virgins could not borrow some oil is simply because deeds are not transferrable. Before God, you cannot be rewarded for the good deeds of others, nor punished for the bad deeds of others. So how can I make sure I have some oil? Serve those around you! Store up as much oil as possible before it is too late. So when your parents, teachers or whoever ask you to do something, see that as an opportunity to score some oil!



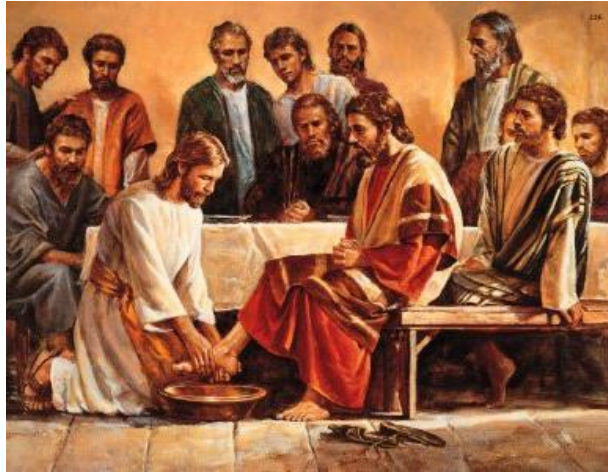
Wednesday

The major event that took place on Wednesday was the betrayal of Jesus. The other thing that we read about on a number of occasions is the anointing of Jesus' feet with fragrant oil. There are a few things we can learn today:

1. In the prophecy of the ninth hour we read: "...So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said to me, 'Throw it to the potter' – that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord for the potter." (Zechariah 11: 12-13) Isn't it amazing that this prophecy was written about 500 years before Christ! And it was fulfilled with such amazing accuracy! The logical conclusion is that the prophecies we heard about yesterday concerning the end of the world will also be fulfilled with this accuracy!
2. Today we are told by the church not to shake hands with people to remember the betrayal of Jesus. There is a beautiful lesson within this custom– let what you hear in church have an influence on your conduct outside of church. If we start with something so small, maybe we can apply this lesson to more significant things throughout the year!



Covenant Thursday



Did you know?

Today is the first time we pray a mass during passion week and it is the shortest mass of the year!

We skip the prayer of reconciliation (that first prayer right after the gospel which begins with “O great and eternal God, who created man in a state of incorruption” and go straight to the creed. The reason is because the reconciliation (derived from the word “reconcile”) between God and man hasn’t been completed yet! That will happen on the cross tomorrow!

The two main events of Covenant Thursday are Jesus washing the disciples’ feet and the Last Supper. God washed our feet to teach us humility, and also to teach us that we should do likewise with each other (John 13:15). The Last Supper was when the Sacrament of the Eucharist (Holy Communion) was instituted...



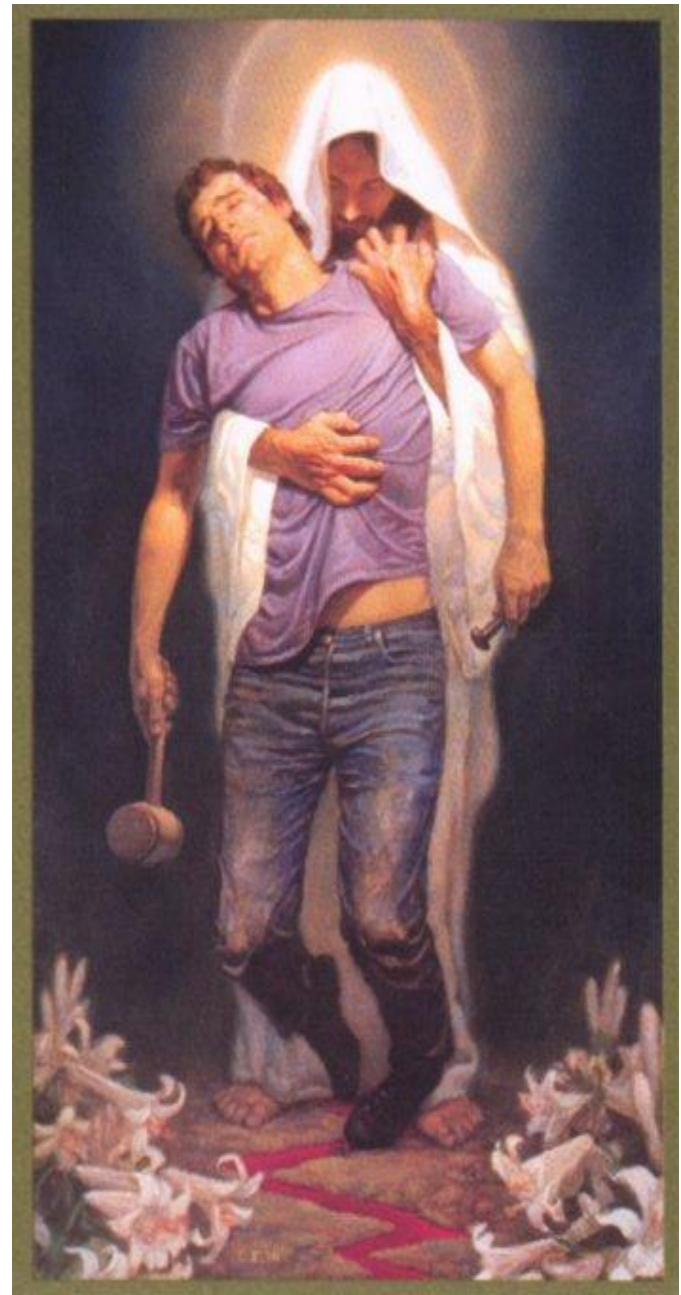
Ask Yourself

How would you react if Jesus washed YOUR feet?

Great Friday

Finally, the day we have all been waiting for! The main event of today is, of course, the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. The church as you enter seems to be filled with sadness. But remember, this should be sadness for our sins, not for Christ. Remember, if He doesn't die, then we don't live!

Today is a long day at church, there is no doubt. But what are we supposed to be doing during all those "owows" the deacons sing? It's not chat to our friends, look at our watches, or try figure out how long is left. If you can't sing with them, then contemplate. Read and re-read the psalm or a verse or two from the gospel of that hour. Ask for God to help you apply it, understand it, live it. For example, "Then Jesus said, "Father, **forgive them**, for they do not **know** what they do." (Luke 23:34) This is a verse you could spend all day contemplating! Surely a few minutes is not too hard. And Good Friday (actually the whole week) is full of verses as such that you can contemplate on. As the deacons chant the psalms during the pascha, contemplate on them!



Easter Sunday

As we all know, today is the day of Jesus' resurrection! Again, there are many lessons to learn:

1. Jesus, who rose fulfilled all those prophecies, who performed all those miracles, who rose from the dead, stops and listens to me when I pray. What on earth have I to worry about?
2. The church is now joyful and is covered in white drapes. We spend the next 50 days joyfully awaiting Pentecost!



Did you know?

We all know that Jesus was in the tomb for three days, but something doesn't make sense. His crucifixion was at the sixth hour on Good Friday and the resurrection was in the early hours of Sunday morning. That's a little over 24 hours – not three days!?

The solution to this is simple. In Jewish culture they used to round days up. Any part of the day, no matter how small, was counted as a complete day. Therefore:

a little bit of Friday + Saturday + a little bit of Sunday = 3 days.