

Lent / Easter 2011

Holy Trinity, Yarmouth  
March 15, 2011

Dear Friends,

*"Every year at the time of the Christian Passover [Easter] we celebrate our redemption through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Lent is a time to prepare for this celebration and to renew our life in the paschal [Easter, again] mystery."*

On Ash Wednesday (March 9) I read these words at two services, as we began the season of Lent. This season of "self-examination, penitence, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, and ...reading and meditating on the word of God" is not simply an exercise of self-punishment. Lent is intended to bring us to Easter, the joyous celebration of freedom. Lent and Easter are stages in the same spiritual journey.

The attached schedule gives you an idea of our observance of Lent at Holy Trinity - there are opportunities for worship: daily Morning and Evening Prayer in the church, two weekday Masses in the Hall, sung Evensong on Sunday evenings. Holy Week (the week before Easter) will, of course, be marked by daily services (including Tenebrae on Wednesday evening), and the special observances of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. And we will put on a series of discussions on "The Blessing of Same-Sex Unions", as part of our Diocesan reflection on this topic.

Christian life involves lifelong learning; and our Lenten observance should involve both learning and a deepening worship. Please consider attending some of the services in our schedule: in Lent we are invited to "read and meditate on the word of God". A wonderful place to do this is in the church with the rest of the Christian community at Holy Trinity, as we sing, pray, receive the Body and Blood of the Lord, and are armed with God's strength and refreshment to share with a needy world. We can "observe a holy Lent" together.

Holy Week is a very special time of preparation for Easter. On Good Friday we will hear our Lord as he speaks to us from the Cross and challenges us to become that which by his grace we already are - his People - his Body - his Church. In the vast majority of our parishes, the vast majority of our people come to Mass on Palm Sunday and on Easter Sunday and that is a gloriously wonderful thing. But the days of Holy Week provide the complete story: God has an awesome amount of love to share with his people. God has chosen to tell this story through the Church, and it is beautifully expressed in the Rites of Holy Week (So eloquent are the Rites that little has been tampered with since the AD 300s.). The story is about Jesus' dying and rising; and because he did that for you, you have a part in that story. And in that story there are no small parts.

The Easter Vigil on Easter Eve begins the great celebration of God's victory over sin and death - a dramatic and beautiful service that introduces us to the joy of Easter. Easter is the most important celebration of the Christian Year. Here we affirm the heart of our faith - God has transformed human life, and opened his heart to us, and we may know and serve God in daily life. This is the "abundant life" that overcomes disaster, guilt, and death itself.

Plan to be present - through Lent and Easter - to hear this whole story of loss and eternal victory.

May you have a blessed Lent, and a joyous Easter.

Every blessing,

Father Doug