

# Daily Devotions

## Holy Week Devotions – April 10-16, 2022

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### Sunday of the Passion/Palm Sunday – April 10, 2022

Text: Philippians 2:8-9

*Christ humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death--even death on a cross.  
Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name.*

This Holy Week begins as they all do with the profound contrast between the procession with palms singing “All Glory Laud and Honor” and then quickly turns to the darkness of Christ’s death. Contrasts are the work of Holy Week. But then living with contradictions is part and parcel of being human every week. And the Christian faith is filled with them. Christ is human and divine. We, each of us, are both saint and sinner. Such conflicts, paradoxes, actually help us. They keep us from choosing sides. They give our lives variety and depth. Every person I know is awash in a river of strengths and weaknesses, virtues and vices. And so am I. Embrace the tension friends. In this Holy Week keep watch for the strange mix of celebration and mourning that mark these days. Know that in the life and death being played out in our worship, there we see our own life in all its mixed-up beauty.

*Everlasting God, in your endless love for the human race  
you sent our Lord Jesus Christ to take on our nature  
and to suffer death on the cross.*

*In your mercy enable us to share in his obedience to your will  
and in the glorious victory of his resurrection,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever. (Prayer of the Day, Year A, Evangelical Lutheran Worship, ELW)*

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### Monday in Holy Week – April 11, 2022

Text: Psalm 36:7

*All people take refuge under the shadow of your wings.*

I wonder what this word from the psalmist sounds like in Ukraine these days? With war raging, bombs and missiles descending from above, homes - places of refuge - destroyed. Where do the people of Kyiv and Mariupol find refuge? It seems too glib to jump to the God answer. While I believe that God is indeed our refuge, “a very present help in trouble,” still it seems too soon for me to say that. Too easy. A premature consolation. Before I can echo the psalmist’s promise, I must dwell in the absence of refuge, try, even if only in the imagination, to take in whatever I can of the terror, the sounds, the loss, the smells. How can I, by prayerful contemplation, enter into

the desperate need for refuge that so many Ukrainians know? Only after such consideration can I then pray for refuge for our Ukrainian brothers and sisters, refuge in all its forms, under holy wings.

*O God, your Son chose the path that led to pain before joy  
and to the cross before glory.  
Plant his cross in our hearts,  
so that in its power and love we may come at last to joy and glory,  
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever.* (Prayer of the Day for Monday in Holy Week, ELW)

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## **Tuesday in Holy Week – April 12, 2022**

Text: Psalm 71:6  
*From my mother's womb you have been my strength.*

Each of the days of this Holy Week brings us closer to the Triduum, the great three days, of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. But lest we jump the gun, too eager to get to the big three, let's just pause on this Tuesday - a neglected day in the middle of the week. No special attention given to this day or to its neighbors Monday and Wednesday. Until now. Since all of Holy Week invites us back to the essentials of our faith, back to the cross and resurrection, why not follow the psalmist's reflection and take a moment or two to recall how our God has been our strength all of our lives? Why not take a moment to jot down a list of all the ways you have been strengthened in your life – in body, mind, and spirit. Maybe you could remember all the little and large deaths and resurrections you have known? And don't overlook the seemingly ordinary. Tuesday should get its due.

*Lord Jesus, you have called us to follow you.  
Grant that our love may not grow cold in your service,  
and that we may not fail or deny you in the time of trial,  
for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever.* (Prayer of the Day for Tuesday in Holy Week, ELW)

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## **Wednesday in Holy Week – April 13, 2022**

Text: Psalm 70:1  
*Be pleased, O God, to deliver me.*

It's okay, Tuesday, I'm right here with you. A nondescript day, nothing special in this Holy Week. Why couldn't there have been a Maundy Wednesday or a Good Wednesday. Alright I'll stop. But really, aren't we all just a little hooked on the big events? Urging to get past the mid-week and on to the weekend. TGIF y'all. Hump day is maybe Wednesday's only claim to fame. Though, being a retired guy, no day and every day can be a hump day.

All this is just buying time for a declaration of Wednesday, or Tuesday if you prefer, as a celebration of the ordinary. A time of waiting. By now anyone reading something like this knows full well what's coming. But rather than giving Thursday and Friday, to say nothing of the weekend, all the glory, how about we think of Tuesday and now Wednesday as "ordinary time" in Holy Week. A moment without the weight of those later days. A time to sit, to rest up, to simply be here and now, wherever here and now is for you. (And, if you're a pastor reading this, you know you need the rest when you can get it.)

So take some resting, take stock, have a little mid-week Sabbath, to remember that all the events of Maundy Thursday through Easter Sunday transform the whole world and every part of it. They cause earthquakes and the defeat of death. Rest while you can.

*Almighty God, your Son our Savior suffered at human hands  
and endured the shame of the cross.  
Grant that we may walk in the way of his cross  
and find it the way of life and peace,  
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever.* (Prayer of the Day for Wednesday in Holy Week, ELW)

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## **Maundy Thursday – April 14, 2022**

Text: John 13:34

*I give you a new commandment, that you love one another just as I have loved you.*

Maybe it's just me (it often is), but this Jesus is up to something with this "new commandment." There's more to this commandment than meets the ear. His disciples, at the table, are hanging on his every word. "I give you a new commandment." And you know that more than half of them are thinking, "Oh good, not another parable, but something law-like that we can actually do." What will it be?

I wonder what the pause was in his delivery. "I give you a new commandment." ...wait for it... "that you love one another." ...Surely another pregnant pause... And in the silence those law loving disciples (can you see yourself in the mirror?) are thinking one of two things. First, "What's the new part of that?" And second, "Could you be more specific?" And then he delivers the punch line, "just as I have loved you."

Now comes the really long silence.

On the one hand it's simple, love one another like Jesus has loved you. Of course this is supernaturally difficult if all this loving is emerging only from my often stingy heart. On the other hand, if the loving originates in the love that loves me and the whole world, well in that case maybe I can let go and love.

Remember, we love because God, in this sometimes tricky Christ, first loved us.

*Holy God, source of all love,  
on the night of his betrayal, Jesus gave us a new commandment,  
to love one another as he loves us.  
Write this commandment in our hearts,  
and give us the will to serve others as he was the servant of all,  
your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever.* (Prayer of the Day for Maundy Thursday, ELW)

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## **Good Friday – April 15, 2022**

Text: Psalm 22:1

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*

This is the day of all days. It is the centerpiece of the Christian faith. Here we see in the most vivid terms possible exactly what it means to be human – exactly what it means to be God. A cross, not a throne. Thorns, not a crown. This cross-shaped lens is the way we baptized folks are invited to see everything.

If God is most clearly present in the cross, then we must look, without turning away, at the places of great suffering in our world: local, regional, national, international. And even that view will not be a wide enough perspective. We need to see the suffering of the whole creation (Romans 8:22) through these cross-shaped glasses. Covid, Ukraine, coral reefs, drought, starvation. These are images of Christ on the cross.

Look without turning away. Surely this is possible because we believe and trust in Christ being raised from the dead. Still, lest we jump prematurely to death's defeat, we need the courage to stay here, and when resurrection comes, to know that new life sends us head and heart-long back into the world. The whole creation in its crucified travail longs for the revealing of the children of God – you and me - to be ambassadors of love and hope on Good Friday and every Friday.

*Merciful God,  
your Son was lifted up on the cross to draw all people to himself.  
Grant that we who have been born out of his wounded side*

*may at all times find mercy in him, Jesus Christ,  
our Savior and Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever. (Prayer of the Day for Good Friday, ELW)*

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## **Holy Saturday – April 16, 2022**

Text: Exodus 15:1-2

*Let us sing to the LORD, who has triumphed gloriously;  
our strength and our might, who has become our salvation.*

In my experience there is no single liturgy in the Christian church more profound, dramatic and packed with symbol and power than the Great Vigil of Easter. From the fledgling fire that ignites the Paschal Candle, to the great Exultet song of praise, to the 12 stories of Old Testament salvation history (I have a special affection for the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Daniel 3:1-29), to the renewal of baptismal promises, or better yet a new baptism, and finally the first eucharist of Easter. This service is a handful, a heart full, a mind full. And its all set in the dark, in the in-between time. Between the grief of Good Friday and the Christ is Risen of Easter. I suspect it is so filled with scriptural and liturgical richness exactly because we need something to do, something to taste, something to touch, something to hear when we are in between. We who wait for resurrection. We need all of this.

*Eternal giver of life and light,  
this holy night shines with the radiance of the risen Christ.  
Renew your church with the Spirit given us in baptism,  
that we may worship you in sincerity and truth  
and may shine as a light in the world,  
through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever. (Prayer of the Day for the Easter Vigil, ELW)*

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