

Holy Week

Daily acts of worship for church or home



Introduction

These resources lead you, day by day, through the events of Holy Week. Each 'day' recalls a particular event, and is set in the context of worship, music, readings, prayers, and a visual focus and responsive action, designed to engage everyone.

The material can be used as presented – as a complete service – or, individual sections can be used on the appropriate day. It is suitable for use at home, in small groups, and in a place of worship. The complete service is best suited to a room or small chapel, where people remain in one place and the symbolic objects are brought in. Alternatively, in a larger space, different parts of the building could be used as the focus for each 'day'. If it is used at home, some objects and actions, and the music, could be scaled down, changed, or omitted.

A common feature to each 'day' is a question and an answer. This draws on an ancient tradition, as found in the Jewish Passover, in which the youngest person present asks the question, and an older person makes the response. You might like to follow this custom.

Planning

- Decide which sections will be used.
- Choose who will ask the questions (see above).
- Choose which version of the Bible to use; an informal version (e.g. *The Message*) may be appropriate.
- Choose who will read the Bible passages, reflection and poem. Encourage them to practise beforehand.
- Hymn and music suggestions are given, but any suitable hymns, songs and music can be used.
- At home, or in a small group, instead of singing, you could listen to a recording or watch a YouTube video.
- The prayer of approach (see right) could be used on a daily basis.
- The optional daily sections for Saturday and Easter Day are not intended for use as part of the complete service.

Written by Don Dowling. Don is an Anglican priest, now retired, who has a keen interest in designing creative worship.

Prepare the space

Cover a table with a cloth (at home, a tray placed on the floor might be more appropriate). Put six tealights or small candles in holders on the table. Prepare the symbolic objects in a place from where they can easily be brought, or put them in various places round the space to which people can move.

- **Palm Sunday** palm crosses, enough for one each and some over
- **Monday** a piece of knotted rope; small lengths of wool, enough for one each
- **Tuesday** a bottle of perfumed oil; a pile of bank notes (you could use Monopoly™ money)
- **Wednesday** a bag of coins (one each and some over)
- **Thursday** bread and wine (or grape juice); a picture of cockerel
- **Good Friday** a bowl of water and a towel; three large nails and a hammer
- **Holy Saturday** a large stone; bandages or a white cloth
- **Easter Day** a pot of spring flowers; a large candle.

The Holy Week materials follow over the page.

Using the material as a complete service

The Hosanna responses are intended only for the complete service. Light six candles at the beginning of the service, and extinguish one for each new day. There is no formal ending to the worship.

Gather

Use different voices, or groups of voices, to build up each response – e.g. each of the two hosannas could be said by half of those present.

Hosanna, Hosanna, Welcome your King.

Hosanna! HOSANNA! WE WELCOME HIM!

Hosanna, hosanna, welcome your Saviour.

Hosanna! HOSANNA! WE WELCOME HIM!

Hosanna, hosanna, welcome your God.

Hosanna! HOSANNA! WE WELCOME HIM!

A prayer of approach

Lord God, we come to worship,
and to be reminded of our Saviour's passion;
by the power of your Spirit,
help us to enter fully into the journey of Holy Week,
that we may be prepared once again
for the celebration that is Easter Day.
We ask in the name of our crucified and risen Lord.
Amen.

Palm Sunday

As quiet music is played, give everyone a palm cross. Put the remaining crosses on the table. Light six candles.



Question Why do we have the palm cross on the table today?

Answer Because on this day Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and the crowd waved palm branches to welcome him as a king. However, they did not understand he came to die on a cross. Jesus has six days to live.

Invite everyone to hold their palm cross as they listen to the reading.

Reading Matthew 21.1-11

Hymn We have a king who rides on the donkey or All glory, laud and honour

Prayer of St Richard of Chichester

Thanks be to thee, my Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits thou hast won for me, for all the pain and insults thou hast borne for me.

O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may I know thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, and follow thee more nearly, day by day.

Amen

Keep a minute or two of silence. At the end of the silence, remove the palm crosses from the table.

Monday of Holy Week

As quiet music is played, put a rope on the table and give everyone a piece of wool. Light five candles.



Question Why do we have a rope on the table today?

Answer Because on this day Jesus drove out the market traders and money changers from the Temple, saying, 'This should be a place of prayer, but you have made it into a den of thieves!' Jesus has five days to live.

Reading Mark 11.15-18

Invite people to tie a knot in their piece of wool, to remind them of Jesus words. Then say together the Lord's Prayer.

Hymn Purify my heart

Keep a minute or two of silence. At the end of the silence, remove the rope from the table.

Tuesday of Holy Week

As quiet music is played, put a bottle of perfumed oil and some bank notes on the table. Light four candles.



Question Why do we have the perfume and the money on the table today?

Answer Because on this day, Jesus was anointed with costly perfume by a woman. Judas was angry, saying, 'It was an extravagant waste of money that had better been spent on the poor.' But Jesus replied, 'She has done a beautiful thing for she is anointing him for his burial.' Jesus has only four days to live.

Reading John 12.1-8

During the next hymn, pass round the bottle of oil and invite people to rub a little into the palm of their hand.

Hymn Said Judas to Mary

Keep a minute or two of silence. At the end of the silence, remove the oil and money from the table.

Wednesday of Holy Week

As quiet music is played, noisily drop a bag of coins on the table. Light three candles.



Question Why do we have a bag with coins on the table today?

Answer Because on this day Judas agreed to betray Jesus to his enemies for money. Jesus has only three days to live.

Pass round the bag of coins and invite everyone to take one, and to hold it while listening to the readings.

Reading Mark 14.10-11

Reflection Thirty pieces of silver

Shining, glinting in my hand
I held the money to the light –
So little for such a deed of darkness.
Eagerly had I counted it,
But now the jingling coins
Chinked like the chain links on the
prisoner's wrists.

Their colour has now changed
From silver to red in the flickering fire.
Sticky with sweat, they smell of betrayal –
Blood money you'd call it.
Thirty pieces of silver,
The price of a slave,
But it held me captive.
I took the money as a token of intent
That I meant business.
They would have given more,
But why hold out for a higher price?

He had enslaved me with his words,
Enthralled me with his promises,
Then broken my dreams at Bethany!
Not a crown, but a cross,
Not power, but pain,
Not victory, but death.
Not my Messiah!
I would give him his desire –
So did I betray him?

Taizé Chant Kyrie, kyrie eleison

Keep a minute or two of silence. At the end of the silence, remove the coins from the table.

Maundy Thursday

As quiet music is played, put bread and wine (or grape juice) and a picture (or model) of a cockerel on the table. Light two candles.



Question Why do we have bread and wine and a cockerel on the table?

Answer Because on this day Jesus shared the last supper with his friends. He said the broken bread was his body, the wine poured out was his blood. He was telling them that he was about die, that one of his disciples would betray him and Peter would deny knowing him. Jesus has only one day to live.

Reading Luke 22.14,19-23,31-34

Pass the bread round and invite people to eat a small piece.

Poem Cockcrow

Symbols are such powerful things –
Flags and eagles, coins and rings.
They tell the story in one sign,
Speak a message, spin a line.
Some we cherish, some we cheer,
Some bring hope, but others fear.
For me the keys they speak of glory,
But cockcrow is another story.
The one reminds me of His trust,
The other brings me to the dust.

For I denied him at the dawn –
Every day that fact I mourn,
For with the crowing of the cock
Thoughts of failure haunt and mock.
I am forgiven – that I know,
But I weep at each cockcrow.

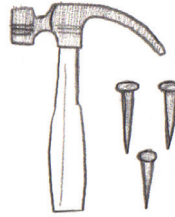
Invite people to sit quietly while listening to the music.

Music Allegri's Miserere,
or part of Garbarek's Officium.

At the end of the music, remove the bread, wine and cockerel from the table.

Good Friday

In silence, put a bowl of water and a towel, three large nails and a hammer on the table. Light one candle.



Question Why the bowl and towel, the hammer and nails?

Answer Because this is the last day of Jesus' life. He was put on trial before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate who washed his hands declaring that he was innocent of the prisoner's blood. Nonetheless, he condemned Jesus to die on a cross. So Jesus was crucified between two thieves.

Reading Matthew 27.15-17,21-24 and Luke 23.32-33,44-49

Invite everyone to dip their hands in the water and dry them using the towel, then say this prayer.

Prayer

Like Pilate we would prefer to wash our hands, rather than take responsibility for difficult decisions. Like the crowd we would be most likely to be carried along by the prevailing mood, rather than speak out against injustice. Like the soldiers we would carry out cruel duties rather than risk our lives by protesting and refusal. Father, forgive us. **Amen.**

Hymn When I survey the wondrous cross

Keep a minute or two of silence.
At the end of the silence, everyone leaves quietly and informally (allowing those who wish to stay for a while, to do so).

Holy Saturday

In silence, put a large stone on the table, and on the stone put a white cloth or some bandages. No candles are lit.



Question Why do we have the large stone and the cloths?

Answer Because the body of Jesus was dressed in grave clothes, then placed in a garden tomb which was closed with a great stone to seal the entrance.

Reading Mark 15.42-47

Hymn My song is love unknown (first verse only)

Keep a minute or two of silence,
then say together

Oh, Jesus, we're so sorry
at how little we all gave –
a borrowed trough, a borrowed ass,
and now a borrowed grave.
Leave the stone and cloth on the table.

Easter Day

As joyful Easter music is played, remove and fold the white cloth or bandages, and put the stone to one side. Put a pot of spring flowers and a large candle on the table. Light the candle.



Question Why has the stone been moved, the grave clothes folded and flowers and a candle placed on the table?

Answer Because on this day the stone was rolled away. The grave was empty, for Jesus is alive, risen from the dead. He is a light that no one can extinguish. The flowers speak of the new life that he brings.

Reading John 20.1-10

Hymn Thine be the glory

Acclamation and sending out

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!