



Easter 2011

For the many years that we have observed Lent and celebrated Easter, we had always been assured of the message of hope and victory supplanting the fleeting sense of rejection, abandonment and defeat. We had always recognized the contrasting messages of loss and victory; of pain and joy and of death and life.

We also had been reflecting on how these messages are played out in our daily lives. We get pulled to the unpleasant and unwanted side which may have lingered longer before we saw the ray of hope that brightened our horizon; enough to induce us to venture into the world once more, renewed with strength and confidence.

This year is no different. When we embarked our Lenten journey with those ashes on our foreheads, we entered another period of reflection and, had we listened to the bidding to look at our family circles and those of our friends and relationships, we should have seen how those contrasting messages touched our lives in some fashion. That pulling to the unwholesome side may have again overwhelmed us. But then, we need to be convinced even more strongly that the rays of healing, renewal and transformation will soon shine upon us and strip us of those hurting veneers of mistrust, betrayal and even faithlessness.

In a few days, faith communities like us will attempt to address more fully the message of hope. This shift from loss to victory and from death to life will be the very core of the reenactment of Jesus' last days, popularly referred to as Holy Week.

We, here at Ascension Parish, will be on a similar path. We will begin with the celebration of the Liturgy of the Palms at the Redwood Grove, weather permitting. With the pageantry typical of our liturgical tradition, we will then process into the church and celebrate Passion Sunday. On Wednesday, we will have a Taize Service beginning at 7:30 pm, highlighting the use of Taize music, light and meditation. Maundy Thursday Liturgy will begin at 6:30 pm with an Agape Meal followed by Foot Washing Liturgy, Stripping of the Altar and a Watch at the Chapel of Repose. There will be two Good Friday Services, 12 Noon and 7:30 pm; the latter includes a reflection on the Seven Last Words and Veneration of the Cross. The Great Easter Vigil on Saturday will begin at 8 pm with the lighting of the new fire at the Memorial Garden and the singing of the Exultet. Easter Sunday will be at 10 am, with baptism and an Easter Egg Hunt, after the service.

While not all of you will be able to make it to all these services, I hope that you will try coming to one or two, especially on Easter Sunday, the Day of the Resurrection of our Lord. I also hope that the various readings from Holy Scriptures will prove helpful in your weeklong celebration of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. As you and your family conclude your holy journey in Lent may you then experience the message of hope and be filled with the great joy of the Resurrected Christ.

On behalf of my family, the Vestry and Staff at Ascension Episcopal Church, I greet you a Happy Easter.

Alleluia. The Lord is risen! He is risen, indeed. Alleluia.

The Rev. Bayani D. Rico
Rector, The Episcopal Church of the Ascension