

At the Foot of the Cross: Notes

We hope that all parishes will put up a cross in a public place for Holy Week but please do make sure that it is well secured and cannot be easily knocked over – either by the elements or by people wishing to touch it. In many places this will mean erecting the cross on the Saturday afternoon or evening, ready for worship the next day. The cross should be dressed with a crown of thorns on Good Friday and grave-clothes and/or flowers on Easter Day as a sign to the local community of our journey with Christ through the Easter story. Think through in advance how you will place the crown of thorns and the grave-clothes and/or flowers on the cross in a dignified but safe way. If possible this could well be done during the final prayer. Also think well in advance whether this is something you can do ecumenically with other Christians from your area. Although presented in a form that can be readily photocopied and used without any further work, these short services are intended as possible outlines only. Please adapt them to your own situation, draw upon the further resources on the website or do something entirely different to mark the setting up of the cross, the crowning with thorns and the decorating with grave-clothes. In many parishes, these prayers will be linked to a main service in church so they have been deliberately kept short. We would suggest that the Palm Sunday prayers could form a natural starting point for a traditional procession to church or depending on location a stopping-point along the way (perhaps palms could be collected from a basket in front of the cross). The Good Friday and Easter Day prayers probably more naturally follow after the main services, with congregations going out from the church to the cross in the town or village (perhaps on Easter Day taking paper flowers made by children during the service). If these prayers are used as stand-alone services, you may want to be rather more ambitious and include some hymns or worship songs or tell the Holy Week story more fully, with either a number of people taking parts or acting the story out around the cross. We would also suggest saying the Lord's Prayer after the collect and finishing with a commissioning prayer or blessing. The best time to take down the cross will vary according to local Easter celebrations but for most churches will probably be the weekend after Easter, perhaps after the main Sunday service. Further resources including suggested readings, intercessions and blessings for each service and prayers for 'Taking Down the Cross' can be downloaded from the *Experience Easter* website.



AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

Palm Sunday – Raising the Cross

For all their pain and horror, Jesus' death and crucifixion were no accident. He himself knew what was to happen and still he set his face towards Jerusalem and rode into the city on a donkey. He travelled towards all that we fear; the evil in the world around us and our own weakness and failure. But nothing in the world or in us could ultimately defeat him. We erect this cross as a sign that as we journey with Jesus to Easter a pathway of peace and new life will unfold before us.

“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32)

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
**because by your holy cross
you have redeemed the world.**

Reading

Silence

During the silence, pray for all who need strength to go on and patience in the face of hard times. You may also like to come forward and touch the cross itself as a sign of your willingness to walk the way of the cross with Jesus this Easter.

True and humble king,
hailed by the crowd as Messiah:
grant us the faith to know and love you,
that we may be found beside you
on the way of the cross,
which is the path of glory. **Amen.**

Good Friday – The Crown of Thorns

Abandoned by his friends, taunted by his enemies, his body whipped and torn, Jesus was nailed to the cross. In that black moment, when darkness seemed to triumph and blot out the light, Jesus took upon himself all the sin and suffering of the whole world. Yet it is here in apparent defeat that God's love triumphs and makes a new future possible.

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.” (1 John 3:16)

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**because by your holy cross
you have redeemed the world.**

Reading

Silence

During the silence, pray for all those who are suffering today throughout the world and especially for all victims of war and violence. You may also like to touch the spikes on the crown of thorns and remember Jesus' suffering for you.

Living God,
whose Son died on the cross for everyone who lives:
show us by his dying
how the place of defeat can be the place of victory;
and help us to take up our own cross
whatever form it takes,
so that people may recognise your love in us
and come to you, with Christ,
in resurrection glory. **Amen.**

Easter Sunday – The Empty Tomb

Early in the morning on the first day of the week, women came to Jesus' tomb to dress his body with spices and perfume. But he was not there. He had risen. On the first day of the first week, God said “Let there be light!” and began his work of creation. So now on the first day of the week, God begins a new creation, where love triumphs over hatred, hope over despair, life over death and the cross becomes a place of victory.

“And the one who was seated on the throne said, ‘See, I am making all things new’.” (Revelation 21:5)

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
**because by your holy cross
you have redeemed the world.**

Reading

Silence

During the silence, pray for our world and for all who feel life is without hope. You may also like to put flowers around the cross to remind you that God's new creation goes on.

Pour love down like fruitful rain, O Christ,
over the dry places of our lives,
so that the hidden seeds of our small ideas
may open into new greening
and bring forth the flowers of transforming hope.
Born again, may we proclaim your victory
in lives of hope, words of joy
and deeds of courageous service;
all because of Jesus, our loving risen Lord. **Amen.**