

## **Now Comes the Season Finale, the Whole Point of Jesus' Incredible Story, an Event Demanding Our Reconciliation**

**Holy Week** as we now practice it, is the last week of the 40 day season of Lent -- with the last three days called the *Easter Triduum*. A triduum is a period of three days which are devoted to special prayers and observances. The Easter Triduum begins on Maundy Thursday with Eucharist and it concludes with evening prayers on Easter Sunday.

Calling these days "Holy Week" is a recent innovation, but within it, the festivals are ancient.

When Christ ate a Passover Meal with his disciples it was an act of love. When he washed their feet, it was an act of humility. At the same time he gave his followers a radical new commandment: to love one another.

All our practices of Maundy Thursday will recall and recreate those events.

**Why Maundy?** Maundy Thursday is the oldest of the special days of Holy Week. The name maundy comes from the Latin word "mandatum" – source of our word mandate – which means "command" as in "I give to you a new commandment: Love one another." These are the words which Jesus spoke to his disciples (recorded in John 13:34) during the Last Supper.

In the Middle Ages, Maundy Thursday was sometimes called Shere Thursday. That word "shere" means "pure" or "guilt-free." That is what medieval Christians hoped to achieve from their self-denial during Lent. But since it was customary for men in those times to cut their hair and beards on this day, "shere" also may have something to do with shearing – as in shearing wool.

In England, the tradition of giving silver coins to the poor might have originated with England's St. Augustine in 597 CE. Today the king or queen distributes small

**What You Want to Know...** If the church in my neighborhood is a freshening-up for Easter... Yesterday our church's kitchen got a new coat of color -- and a second coat is coming; again **Joyce Corn** and **Louise Stroude** wielded the paint brushes and **Inez Ford** found better storage places for the visual clutter above the cabinets.... **Fr. Whitlock's** sense of celebration will show up in a colorful Easter Sunday Order of Worship ("church bulletin" to some).... **Judy Krug** met with a landscape specialist last week to design new plant beds, then she pruned and weeded the *flora* that we have in place.... Ford Hall's new **white shingles** (better to reflect the heat away) are in place now and it does look tidier up there.... There's a new **cheeriness** in the Parish Hall just from that display of colorful greeting cards....

purses of Maundy Money to elderly residents chosen for their community service, a custom also connected to the practice of King John who gave garments, knives, food, and other gifts to poor men on Maundy Thursday in accordance with Christ's mandate to love others.

Later in the 17th century, the British King or Queen would wash the feet of poor people as a gesture of humility. But Samuel Pepys wrote in his famous diary in 1667 "the King (Charles II) did not wash the poor people's feet himself, but the Bishop of London did it for him." A lack of humility perhaps?

**What happens during the Maundy service?** Since it was on this night that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, Eucharist is the emphasis of *continued on back page*

### **Holy Week Services**

**Maundy Thursday, Apr 13:** a Passover Seder supper in our Parish Hall beginning at 5:30 PM. Then Washing of the Feet; Institution of the Last Supper; Stripping of the Altar.

**Good Friday, Apr 14:** Traditional Good Friday Liturgy at St. Matthews at 12 noon with a Community of Celebrants. Fr. Whitlock will preach. Stations of the Cross (indoors and out). See Map on page 2.

**Holy Saturday, Apr 15:** a deanery-wide Easter Vigil at St. Peter's Cathedral at 8:00 PM.

**Easter Sunday, Apr 16:** A Celebration of Joy at St. Augustine's beginning at 9:00 AM.

The Stewardship Committee has assumed the lead on this and **The Card Shop** will be open after every church service.

**"... more\* from St. Augustine's"** is for members and friends of one courageous Episcopal Church in south St. Petersburg, FL. This weekly newsletter is about candor, recognition, spiritual attitude, nixing hearsay and, yes, unashamed cheer leading. Members Judy and Tom Krug are co-editors. Some 65 parishioners are essential to the effort. Every issue is available at the church and online at [www.staugstpete.org](http://www.staugstpete.org), our web site for church-shoppers.

## **Season Finale** *continued*

the service. Also Christians wash each other's feet and at the end of the service, the altar is stripped in preparation for Good Friday. This symbolizes the abandonment of Jesus by his disciples and the stripping of Jesus by the Roman soldiers. Psalm 22, which seems to prophesy Christ's death, is read while the altar is stripped.

**How we observe Good Friday.** Since services on this day are written to observe Jesus' death, a celebration like Eucharist would be inappropriate. So traditionally there is no Communion observed on Good Friday. All pictures, statutes, and crosses are covered in the black of mourning, the chancel and altar coverings are replaced with black, and altar candles are extinguished. They are left this way through Saturday, but they are always replaced with white before sunrise on Sunday.

**What's the symbolism of Tenebrae?** A common service for Good Friday is Tenebrae – from Latin meaning "shadows" or "darkness." It is a Service of Darkness with Scripture read while lights and candles are gradually extinguished to symbolize the hopelessness in the world without God. That service ends in darkness when the Christ candle is carried out of the sanctuary to symbolize the death of Jesus. Often the service concludes with a loud noise symbolizing the

---

## **First The Gospel, Now Steppin, Next Year Graduation, Then L.A.**

When usher and past Senior Warden **J.D. Hires'** son **Justin** was only nine years young, he asked his mother **Barbara** to quit her job as school principal and move the family to Los Angeles -- so he could land a job as an actor. Mom and Dad chose not to grant that young wish, but eleven years later Justin may be on his way regardless.

Now in his junior year at Clark Atlanta University majoring in Mass Communications, Justin has just been cast as Byron in a new feature motion picture titled *Steppin*. Over the years Justin has had several agents and has worked in theater productions, TV commercials, print ads, even stand-up comedy.

Justin has persevered and it has paid off. He met film producer Will Packer at an Ebony Scholars Awards ceremony and pressed him for a movie role. Packer and director Rob Hardy liked his audition tape and asked him to audition for a role in last year's *The Gospel*. So began a career we can watch with fascination.

closing of Jesus' tomb. Worshippers leave in silence.

**What about the Easter Vigil?** Churches are dark after Tenebrae; but then comes Easter Vigil with its theme that light conquers darkness. This has evolved into our Easter sunrise service, but its history is much richer. Easter Vigil begins in darkness. Old Testament Scripture readings tell the story of God's people during their Exodus and the promise of the restoration of Israel. This is meant to help us understand the work of God in history. In darkness, the Christ candle is returned to the sanctuary and it is lit. From this "new fire" all other candles in the sanctuary are lit, including the candles of all those worshiping, to symbolize the resurrection as the "true light that enlightens everyone" (John 1:9).

In the early church, the Easter Vigil concluded with baptism, celebrating the new life that came from God through the death and resurrection of His son. People newly baptized changed into new white garments symbolizing the new life in Christ. Those garments may have given rise to our tradition of new clothes for Easter.

---

## **Up by 8, Yet Still So Much to Learn**

Two months ago we published a piece about our Bishop's requirement that St. A's average 75 worshipers per Sunday. Our attendance had been hovering around 46.

Since then we have grown. In the last five weeks, we've had an average attendance of 53.6, up by 8.

Parish committees will work to keep that attendance increasing. Yet we have to remember that simply filling the pews is not the name of our game. St. A's is about enabling and encouraging people to grow a relationship with God. Period.

To do that, we are coming to see that each of us needs to learn about the people we seek. Marcus Borg calls them The Church Alumni Association -- those who once attended church, but do not now -- and those who never have.

We need to have answers to their issues.

We are not, of course, trying to "capture" people from other churches. But if we are to grow, we will have to prepare ourselves to answer their questions about church and not shy away from their challenges to our deeply held beliefs. It won't be easy, but it is our ministry.

---

## **Where Exactly Is St. Matthew's?**

