

Holy Week in Exile

While the Church continues her sojourn through this Lenten wilderness, we remember our Hebrew forefathers in their Exile to Babylon. Banished to a foreign land, their Temple destroyed, they could not observe the Passover as they had for a thousand years. “How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?” they cried (Psalm 137:4).

We echo those words, finding ourselves in similar confusion as we approach Holy Week - the highest week of the Church year, wherein we bear our palms in procession, we partake of the Lord’s Supper on the night He was betrayed, and we reenter the darkened sanctuary together to declare His triumph over Death and Hell.

How shall we sing the Lord’s song, while we are in this foreign land? How shall we celebrate, when we cannot commune together? How shall we worship, apart from Mount Zion, even the altar of Christ Lutheran Church?

Fear not, for even as Daniel prayed alone in his room, so shall we persist in praying together while we are apart. This Holy Week will be unlike any we have ever experienced—it will be our Passover in Babylon. But God remembered His people in captivity, and He protected Daniel against the teeth of the lions. So too, though *our adversary the Devil prowls around like a roaring lion* (1 Peter 5:8), the Lord has closed his mouth against us.

This Holy Week will be different: No one will be here to share the Lord’s Supper of Maundy Thursday. There will be no liturgy on Holy Saturday. No one will march into the sanctuary to keep vigil on the night before Easter. But we will spend this vigil in the pit of the lions, sealed beneath a rock.

Though the night is long, though the teeth of

our enemy encircle us, rejoice, for the dawn is coming. And on the third day, we will emerge with Daniel, and say, “He is risen! He is risen, indeed!”

Due to the restrictions of this extended quarantine, **we cannot meet together for Good Friday and the days following**, as we had previously hoped. Rather, we will continue to upload worship services to the internet for everyone to participate from afar. Along with these changes, **there will no longer be a Maundy Thursday or Easter Vigil service**, as those liturgies depend so heavily upon congregational presence. **This Holy Week will consist of Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday.**

We say with the psalmist, “Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy!” (Psalm 137:6). For indeed, we look forward to our return to Jerusalem, when we will be reunited in the courts of the Lord’s House. This Easter, do not forget the songs of Zion, for Christ has triumphed over the grave—even for those in exile.

Hold fast, dear Christians, for soon you shall say, “He is risen! He is risen, indeed!”