

## It's Holy Week

This is Holy Week. Because we remember the last days of Jesus' life on earth, it is a week of both great exuberance and great sorrow. It began with Palm Sunday, which for those who were there, must have been a day of anticipation excitement, and joy. We have those feelings too, but we also know what is coming next. . . For the people who were there, much of the rest of the week must have been one of frenzy or indifference for the crowd, and one of confusion, shocked surprise, fear, horror and dismay; with a large dose of hopelessness by Friday, for those who had followed Jesus during his ministry. We have an advantage over all of them because we have read the week's last chapter first and know that, what must have seemed to be only a somber, hopeless ending to them was in fact the first chapter of an amazing new and continuing story.



We are reminded every day that the continuing story has not been one of smooth sailing, virtue and goodness. God is faithful and keeps his promises, but those who claim the name Christian have done no better than did the chosen people of the Old Testament at faithfully embracing and living God's calling. There have been many failures to be faithful and even atrocities committed by people who claim to be acting in Jesus' name – too many of those to count in fact.

Our need to seek forgiveness and start afresh to follow Jesus faithfully is a daily occurrence. Some of our failings are part of our human nature like greed and self-centeredness. Others have been with us for centuries like the sin of racism. Still others come when we lose sight of what God has in mind for his people or that we are not the center of the universe. Easter is a reminder that God's forgiveness is there for the asking. The call to take up your cross and follow is a reminder that Easter's blessing is not a free ride. Forgiveness is a gift not an entitlement, and definitely not a license to go out and repeat the mistakes of the past.

As we are caught up in the celebration of Easter and the wonder of Jesus' gift to us, let us not forget that Monday is coming and the work of being faithful continues. We see all around us the evidence of our failures to do our Lord's bidding. God empower us to continue taking up your cross and striving to do better. Help us put our Easter enthusiasm into seeking your will, sharing the Gospel, speaking out against injustice, and helping those who suffer.

### This week, remember in prayer:

- **The victims of gun violence.** The needless carnage continues. . .
- **People dealing with COVID-19.** The number of vaccinated people is growing, & there is currently a decline in new cases in some places, but another surge is building. With spring gatherings, help us not to back off on safety measures. The future of this virus is still a work in progress. There is still much we do not know about it.
- **Refugees and those displaced by violence** – especially during this pandemic, & especially the children. Remember that people do not flee their homes unless forced or because conditions where they live, are far worse than those, they know they will face when fleeing. Remember those who have already received approval to come to the U.S. seeking asylum, and for whom arrangements have been made to welcome them, only to have their flights to the U.S. canceled (700 flights have been canceled in March alone) . . . "Refugees contribute greatly to the United States in ordinary times, and have continued to show up for their new communities during the COVID-19 crisis, with many working on the frontlines of the pandemic, including 176,000 refugees serving in the healthcare field and 175,000 working as part of the food supply chain. Our experiences working alongside refugees mirror the statistics that demonstrate that refugees bring tangible benefits to U.S. communities by starting businesses, becoming homeowners, revitalizing local economies, and becoming civic leaders" (letter to the President organized by the Refugee Council USA signed by 200 religious, humanitarian and other groups).

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