

St. James' E-pistle: **SPECIAL EDITION**

A Letter from the Rector for April 3, 2020

Dear People of St. James',

As some of you have heard by now, I managed to pass my doctoral thesis defense on Thursday afternoon. I thank you all very much for your prayers of support through the big day! It was a day long coming, and many years in the making, but it seems to have turned out worthwhile in the end: my advisory committee gave the project a High Pass with No Revisions Needed, and a Recommendation for Publication. Huzzah! I'll look forward to bringing the program to St. James' through the years that await us together!

The one note of disappointment from my defense came when the Program Director let me know that there would be no graduation ceremony this year, due to the coronavirus shutdown of the campus of Virginia Theological Seminary. But, the plan at this point is that my cohorts will be able to gather together at the Convocation ceremony in October, and be formally hooded at that time. The message was not what I wanted to hear, but it still carried an assuring sense of hope: my classmates and I, who have been together in this process for the past five years, and encouraging each other on to the finish line every step of the way, **would** be together at some point in the future, when celebrating in person is a safe and responsible thing to do.

For us here at St. James', I think that same message is true for all of us, on so many levels. We will return together for worship and fellowship some day in the future, whenever it is the safe and responsible things to do. That may not be on Palm Sunday, that may be not Easter Sunday, that may not be for a number of weeks or even months. But we **will** return one day, and we will be filled with rejoicing and gladness when we do! But in the meantime, which may turn out to be an exceedingly long, stressful, sorrowful meantime, we will make do and stay connected as best as we can. During this time of exile, may we never lose sight in our hearts and minds and souls of that coming great day when we will be reunited together again. Yes, that will surely be a day we long for, perhaps more than we ever could have imagined in the age "B.C." (Before Coronavirus).

And in this present "Great Meantime"—**Holy Week is nearly upon us!** We are painfully aware that, as much as we might prefer otherwise, our journey through this holiest week of the year will be radically different this time around. But we will do what we can, and try to

remain thankful for the opportunities to mark these sacred days as best as we are able. So, below follows a day by day schedule that I've put together for Holy Week observances available for St. James' this year. (*Please note that Diocesan services will be available on the [Facebook page of the diocese](#), as well as the diocesan [Youtube page](#). Full descriptions of the diocesan events and links are available [here](#).*):

Palm Sunday/The Sunday of the Passion (3/5):

- **The Liturgy of the Palms with Morning Prayer**, broadcast on St. James' Facebook page and web site at 9am. Your bulletin is available for download [here](#).

Monday in Holy Week (3/6):

- **Compline** at 9pm. (via Zoom—see the [calendar](#) on the parish website for the link to join our Zoom gatherings)

Tuesday in Holy Week (3/7):

- **Evening Prayer** at 8pm (Via Zoom)

Wednesday in Holy Week (3/8):

- **Compline** at 9pm (via Zoom)

Maundy Thursday (3/9):

- **Diocesan Maundy Thursday Service** with our bishops from noon to 12:30pm;
- **A Quiet Evening in the Chapel Garden of Repose** for St. James' at 9pm (via St. James' Facebook and Parish Website). Materials to guide your garden meditations are available [here](#).

Good Friday (3/10):

- **Diocesan Stations of the Cross** at noon;

- **Good Friday Liturgy of the Day** at 3pm for St. James'. (via St. James' Facebook and Parish Website)

Holy Saturday (3/11):

- **Brief Liturgy of the Day** for St. James' at 9am. (via St. James' Facebook and Parish Website);
- **Sharing of the Easter Light** with the Diocese at 8pm.

Easter Sunday (3/12):

- **Diocesan Easter Sunday Celebration** at 10am, followed by an
- **Easter Message** for St. James' from the Rector on our Facebook Page and Parish Website at noon.

Please note: All of St. James services will remain available on our parish Facebook page and website following their initial broadcast, for those who would like to view at a later time.

Please note also that we have a compilation of resources for families to use in daily devotions together for each day of Holy Week. This publication is available for download [here](#).

Also, as a final request from me: I would like to have as many additional voices and faces participate in our ongoing video worship through the coming season. Volunteer Readers are needed to record themselves on a phone or computer, reading the text that I will send to you. All you need to do is make the recording, send it back to me, and I'll take it from there. All members of the parish, of any age, are welcome to participate in this opportunity. If you need technological assistance, I'll be glad to help!

Thanks to you all for walking this way of Holy Week together with me.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Dustin+