



# Lent 2025




## Holy Week Devotional

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church

5800 Hampton Street  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

412-661-1245  
[www.standrewspgh.org](http://www.standrewspgh.org)



Dear St Andrew's,

*I'm so glad to share this devotional companion to Holy Week with you. A seminary professor told us, when we were learning about the liturgies for Holy Week, that "if Holy Week seems endless, that's because it is." This week we enter into the most profound mysteries at the center of our faith. The only way through these mysteries is through them; to fully contemplate and inhabit the condemnation, suffering, and love that brings us to the joy of Easter. Jesus Christ travels with us through every trial, and this week we have the opportunity to accompany him through his own and to join with him in the victory of life and love over death and fear. Thanks to each of our writers for sharing their time and skill with us for this week.*

*Blessings,  
Sara+*

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## SUNDAY, APRIL 13TH: PALM SUNDAY

KATHLEEN EGAN



**Crucified dying  
Jew  
Playing redemption's  
blood sport  
With love-scarred hands  
Purchasing mercy  
for  
One jeering  
Roman soldier**

# MONDAY, APRIL 14TH

ANTHONY CRISAFIO

## A meditation on the *Via Dolorosa*

*John 19: 6, 15-17, NKJV*

Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!" Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. Then they took Jesus and led Him away. And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha.

*Mark 15: 21, NKJV*

Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross.

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We start Holy Week by recounting the Passion (Mark 11:1-11 or John 12:12-16). We remember the events that went from Christ's condemnation by His peers to His crucifixion. If you have ever been to Jerusalem, you can walk the road the Jesus took - the *Via Dolorosa* (the "Way of Suffering"). You start the walk at the Lion's Gate (St. Stephen's Gate) in the Muslim Quarter and end at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The first station of the *Via Dolorosa*, like the last, is housed in a church (well, really a few churches in a monastery compound; The Churches of the Flagellation and of the Condemnation & Imposition of the Cross) that recalls multiple events: Christ's condemnation and taking up the cross. We hear the whip in our mind's ear. We hear Pilate's *Ecce homo* (Behold the man) as he presents the beaten Christ, crowned in thorns to the crowd. We re-enact the crowd shouting "Crucify him!" and "We have no king but Caesar".

We leave the churches, as Christ did, feeling the weight of the cross. Of the burdens that we carry with us: our past, our sins, our imperfections, our problems. We walk as Christ did putting one foot in front of the other. But, unlike Christ who knew what awaited him at the end of the Way, we don't know what is coming. When we will stumble under that weight, when we will lose our footing, or when we will fall flat.

In those moments, we offer this prayer **“Lord, I have fallen under the weight of my burdensome Cross - aid me in finding my feet, standing tall again, and to keep putting one foot in front of the other. Amen.”**



*Art by Jack*

## TUESDAY, APRIL 15TH

WES ROHRER

*1 Cor. 18-19, 25*

“For the message about the cross is foolishness for those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.’ ... For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.”

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For most of us the Christian cross is troubling and paradoxical. It serves as a symbol of Christian identification, belief and commitment to certain beliefs and behavior and also as the iconic representation of the means of Jesus’s violent, cruel and degrading death, the Roman form of execution for the most disdained criminals and traitors. It follows that devotion to the cross as the focus for our worship of Christ, the Son of God, is puzzling and problematic.

Paul’s epistle to the Church at Corinth doesn’t pull any punches: that to be counted among the faithful and become truly wise, his listeners (both in the early church and now) must act foolishly. We must accept both Jesus’ suffering on the cross, the empty tomb and His miraculous resurrection, an outcome totally beyond expectation and defying human logic.

The disciples benefited from evidence of the reality of Jesus’ resurrection by his post-death appearances both to Mary Magdalene and his disciples. The resurrected Christ instructs Mary to go and tell His brothers: “I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” (John 20:17). Later after appearing before the disciples through a locked door, Jesus shows them the wounds from His crucifixion and

breathes the Holy Spirit upon them. He urges Thomas to “reach out your hand and put it into my side” as undeniable truth of his physical presence and an antidote to doubt and disbelief. (John 20:27)

In our age of cynicism, rejection of the miraculous and suspicion of religious belief systems, we are prone to be “doubting Thomases” even if we yearn to believe. So on what grounds are we willing to accept and proclaim the foolishness of the Gospel? How can we probe the wounds, see the scars and feel the breath of the Holy Spirit on us, today, during Holy Week 2025? What evidence do we require to reject worldly wisdom in favor of the foolishness that Paul insists we must endorse and by which we must live and be justified?

As for most profound questions there is likely no easy answer nor a clear set of “how to” instructions for embracing holy foolishness. We have our own crosses to bear: the grief, disappointments, failures, and rejections we too often experience as God’s creatures. Yet we also yearn for meaning, purpose, reconciliation and acceptance in our lives. We want to believe in God’s promise of mercy, forgiveness and compassion and above all in the foolishness of His limitless love for us and the priceless gift of true, relentless belief. Perhaps, the Psalmist provides us useful directions for how to proceed in response to Paul’s challenge:

“In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge; let me never be ashamed. In your righteousness, deliver me and set me free; incline your ear to me and save me ... O God, be not far from me; come quickly to help me, O my God ... But I shall always wait in patience and shall praise you more and more.” (Ps. 71: 1-2,12,14)

## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16TH

MICHELLE DOMEISEN

It is impossible to read the Gospel passages of Jesus stumbling, falling, being nailed to the cross and crying in agony and not feel helpless. It is even worse to visually experience the same in a movie. The brutality, hopelessness and cruelty of His suffering is more than one can imagine. Each year as we walk alongside this Passion journey with Christ, we want to do something, anything, to help. But we can't. No matter how many times we experience the Gospel readings leading up to and actually depicting the suffering and death of Christ, we are left helpless. If we put ourselves into the story as one of the apostles, there is clarity about what was about to happen despite their helplessness. Jesus was very candid in telling his closest followers what was to come but they didn't want to hear it. He tried to prepare them. And once the entire story played out, they realized that the suffering he endured could happen to any one of them. He was human and so were they. So they were overcome with fear. But is that the response Jesus wanted from them? We know that Jesus told the twelve that by risking their lives, they might truly find them. He urged them to live without fear and understand true surrender to God. For as many times as we've experienced the Passion story, have we understood this lesson yet?



# THURSDAY, APRIL 17TH: MAUNDY THURSDAY

ANTHONY CRISAFIO

## **A meditation on the women of Jerusalem and Jesus falling**

*Luke 23:27-31, NKJV*

And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning to them, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!" 'For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?"

*Psalm 37:23-24, NKJV*

The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand.

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In Stations 8 and 9 of the Way of the Cross, we encounter the women of Jerusalem and Christ falling for the third time. One with evidence in Scripture (Luke 23: 27-31) and one in tradition.

In Luke, Jesus knows that despite the pain, despite the agony, despite the death – He will rise. He knows that beyond the brutal betrayal of His flesh and the torture of crucifixion, on the third day His pain will be put aside and He will rise in glory. But the women, the apostles, his own mother don't know this. They have heard the Prophets telling of the rising of the Messiah, they have heard Jesus talk about the road he will inevitably walk. But there is knowing and knowing. And in this



moment, they are mourning and lamenting His death. This is why He tells them **“Do not weep for Me.”**

We move forward in the Via and see Christ falling for a third time. It's not enough that he falls before He falls before His mother and before they press Simon of Cyrene into carrying the cross (just to spread the agony around). He falls after Veronica wipes His face. In these falls, we see that Christ is truly and fully human. He struggles not once, but three times, with the weight of the Cross, with the existential and physical weight of His burden. His feet stumble over the cobblestones in a way we can fully appreciate and recall – who hasn't lost their footing on a stone street, in a pothole, on a dirt road?

Today, we acknowledge and affirm that Christ was both fully human and fully Divine. He in the most pastoral and compassionate way comforted the women of Jerusalem as He walked to His death – knowing that without the death, the resurrection would not happen and without the resurrection, there was no fulfillment of the prophecy nor redemption. But as He comforts the women, He falls before and after He meets them. In the most relatable movement of this Passion, He stumbles, He loses His footing, He rolls His ankle.

Despite His stumbling, He continued on. Despite His humanity, through His divinity He died for our sake. For this we pray: **“We adore You, Christ, and we bless You – because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world. Amen.”**

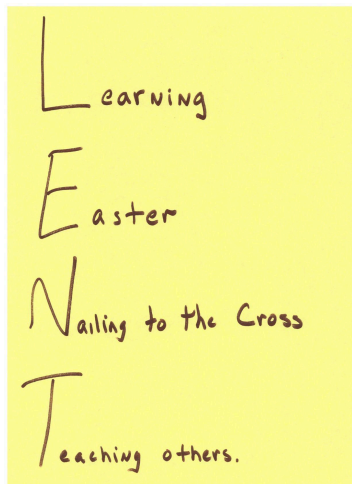
# FRIDAY, APRIL 18TH: GOOD FRIDAY

WES ROHRER

## Closure coming

Below the metal-gray sheets  
of overcast, unforgiving gray  
The searing pain from the brutal  
nails into crushed hands and feet  
The never healed stripes stinging like nettles  
The cuts in his brow from the malicious crown -  
So cruel irony had they realized He was true King -  
The aching bruised shoulders from the weight of the bar  
Bearing the scaffolding for His final humiliation  
Relief at least at last  
That our Father's mandate has been fulfilled, yet  
Bitter stream of memory traces  
as he struggled up the steep rocky path  
Panting dazed by fatigue and pain unrelieved  
Feeling the scornful cries and venomous spite  
Of the mob, blind and deaf to virtue  
Toward the killing place overlooking the temple  
And those sheep down below  
Asleep unhearing misled deniers  
Missing the moment and message until  
His anguished cry out of despair

For his Father's forsakenness and their unbelief  
As his head dropped with the final flutter of breath  
The anguish extinguished  
Then the thunderclap of the curtain torn in half  
The quaking of the earth, splitting of rocks  
Foundations of Jerusalem shaken and crumbled  
Announcing the Father's judgment:  
He was my Son, everlasting. the  
Promise of defeat of death and despair hidden  
By the quiet miracle of the empty tomb  
Yet only the women believed  
until Thomas needing proof of the wounds  
Of the Savior before him in new flesh  
Certified that the story was not yet  
Finished ...



L earning  
E aster  
N ailing to the Cross  
T eaching others.

*Poem by younger church school students,  
with adult scribe assistance!*

## SATURDAY, APRIL 19TH

MICHELLE DOMEISEN

For most of my life, I have thought of Holy Saturday as a day of quiet anticipation. That day that sits in between. In seminary, I read papers and participated in discussions centering on the idea we are living Holy Saturday kinds of lives where we are in a perpetual, anticipatory waiting period. Good Friday is a day laden with all of the deepest reflections on the agonizing last three hours until Jesus' body expires. We read Psalm 51 or listen to it sung in the "*Misere, Mei Deus*" where we repent of our sins. But Saturday is the quiet day, the vigil day. Then I saw the movie "The Passion of the Christ" where an image still burns in my mind. It is of Jesus' mother, Mary, underneath a stone firmament of where her son is chained. She is doing anything she can to feel the ground above her to sense his suffering and let him know she was there. That's what love does. I was particularly touched since I grew up with a Roman Catholic father who had a particular devotion to Mary because his own mother abandoned him as a small child. Mary's unending devotion to her son was of particular note to my dad. Since watching that searing scene in the movie, I often think about Mary during Holy Week. Saturday wasn't the quiet vigil day for her. She was still reeling from walking alongside her son's excruciating journey and having watched His crucifixion. She never abandoned Him even in the worst of circumstances. This Holy Saturday, along with our many Holy Week reflections and prayers, I'll still be thinking about Mary.

# SUNDAY, APRIL 20TH: EASTER SUNDAY

LAUREL ROBERTS

*Matthew 28: 5-6*

The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.

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On Easter, the heartbroken women meet an angel at the tomb, who reassures them of Christ’s faithfulness. “He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.” These eleven words from Matthew’s account distill the Easter story to its simplest truths. Christ has done what he said he would do. And today we are blessed, because we still live in the truth that he will always keep his promises to us. What a wonderful way to begin our Eastertide, joyful in our trust of the Lord!



*Art by Maura*

# MONDAY, APRIL 21ST: EASTER MONDAY

JODIE MOORE

Luke 24:13-35: The Road to Emmaus

*They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" (verse 32)*

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I've always loved this story, which is unique to Luke. It tells of two traveling companions, disciples with a small "d", who have gone to Jerusalem for Passover and are now walking the seven mile Roman road back home to Emmaus. In my mind's eye, they are dispirited and depressed, eyes downcast, minds focused inward, replaying Jesus' arrest and torture, the excruciating nailing of his limbs to the cross and the subsequent painful vigil. Perhaps they even witnessed Jesus' lifeless body, nails removed, being handed over to Joseph of Arimathea for burial. "All of Jerusalem" was abuzz with the horror of these events.

How was it possible that this prophet, this messiah, this liberator of Israel from Roman oppression had been arrested and crucified like a common criminal? Their dreams were broken; their hopes dashed. And it was a long way home.

Into this scene of despair walks a stranger, whom we later learn is Jesus. Was it the fog of their disillusionment that prevents Cleopas and his companion from recognizing Jesus? Had they never seen Jesus close up, so they wouldn't have known him anyway?

As it was for these two, today is our Easter Monday. We too have wept at the foot of the cross. We have celebrated our Easter Passover. We have learned that the tomb is empty. We are returning to our day-to-day lives. We have had no

encounter with Jesus...that we recognize. In fact, it seems that recognizing the risen Lord is not a given...that missing Jesus in our day-to-day lives can be quite common. And not seeing can lead to losing hope and eventually belief.

But the good news of Luke's gospel is that we are all promised an encounter with the risen Lord. In the community's shared breaking of the bread "our eyes are opened", and we recognize this Jesus in whom we live and move and have our being. In the humble act of eating and drinking together we are assured that Jesus' story did not end on the cross or in the empty tomb. In partaking of the bread our eyes are opened to seeing him at work in our daily lives. Jesus Christ is risen indeed.



*Art by Miles*

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Kathleen Egan** is a longtime friend of St Andrew's who was introduced to this congregation by her late sister Mary Pat Luley and Peter Luley. She joined the choir in late winter this year.

**Anthony Crisafio**, a researcher at Pitt, is a passionate coffee drinker, Krav Maga (Israeli martial arts/self-defense) practitioner, and movie-fan.

**Wes Rohrer** is a member of St Andrew's team of lay ministers, the outreach committee, and is active in our adult education offerings, notably as the convener of the Thursday morning "Growth in the Spirit" group. He is a retired University of Pittsburgh professor from the School of Public Health.

**Michelle Domeisen** is part of our team of lay ministers at St Andrew's, most recently having preached and led our service on March 30. She has a Doctor of Ministry degree from Pittsburgh Seminary and an MBA from Pitt. Having just retired from a career in commercial real estate, she and her husband, Frank, are loving being new grandparents.

**Laurel Roberts'** family joined St Andrews in 1995, and she is a proud parent of two former acolytes and has served three (including her current) terms on vestry, as well as with altar guild. A 9th generation Pittsburgher, she is a Teaching Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at Pitt.

**Jodie Moore** is a co-founder of the Neighborhood Academy who has been involved in many capacities since joining St Andrew's in 2021, most recently as lay minister and chair of the 2024 rector call discernment committee. She has a Master's of Divinity from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.