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OUR EASTER SERVICES

We've made a good start on preparing for the Paschal Triduum, the three greatest days of the Church's year. Thanks to everyone who is making time to come together for singing. We'll be holding serving practices too, during Holy Week itself.

Being There

I think we celebrate these liturgies, not for the sake of the Church, but in the name of all humanity, and we must do them justice. The most beautiful services in the history of the Church are useless unless the Church is present at them: so I thought it would be a good idea if we have plenty of notice of these great moments, which have the power to change our lives. We have three weeks to go before Palm Sunday...I suggest that we all get our diaries out to mark these dates and times. Most good things come in threes, and these are no exception to the rule.

The Lord's Supper

The evening Mass on Maundy Thursday is the most atmospheric of all the year: this is the re-enactment of the first Mass, when Jesus drew the map for the Church's liturgy for the next twenty centuries (and counting) when he said: *Do this in memory of me*. We are still faithfully doing it, every day but one of the year; but this evening Mass has a quite special eloquence and power, as we celebrate the unbearable intimacy of the Last Supper, and Jesus taking our daily bread in hands that will very soon be bound, and then nailed, and then folded in burial. **The Mass will begin at 7 pm.** After the Gospel we shall be carrying out the command of Jesus to wash feet. It would be good if those whose feet are washed could include representatives of every age-group and condition of life and ministry in our community. Please agree if you're asked, and don't make a fuss like St Peter!

After the Lord's Supper we go out in spirit to the Garden of Gethsemane, to share in the last hours of the Lord's freedom. There will be a prayerful vigil until 10 pm.

The Passion and Death of the Lord

Good Friday, and a day of fasting and abstinence from meat: with the Lord arrested, all our eyes are on his trial, condemnation, and death. The keeping of a Bank Holiday on this day has nearly decayed into nothing in our country - a sad fact! I

hope all Catholics will move the secular things firmly out of the way, to be at the foot of the Cross **at 3 pm**. For those who absolutely can't make it, we will have Stations of the Cross in the morning at 10 30, after which there is an ecumenical Procession of Christian witness through Lincoln at 11 30 am. The city will be about its business, but at least some people may catch a glimpse of the Church's devotion to Christ.

After the solemn celebration of the Lord's death the Church is silent and the liturgy is not celebrated.

The Great Vigil

We want to do everything we can to focus all our resources and energy on this tremendous celebration. It is our entry into the mystery which changes the history of the universe, and gives us the true meaning of our lives. The Church rules that it may never be begun before nightfall. In our world, polluted by sodium glare, we are taking this to mean that **the Vigil begins at 8 pm**. Nothing can be more vital than our attendance at this liturgy. It would be a sad soul that would want to choose any other way of celebrating Easter. It will be difficult for people who live out in distant parts: so please let us know if you're prevented from coming by lack of transport, and we will do our best to share cars. Let's do everything we can to gather the whole community for this highest of all feasts. **In favour of the Vigil, there will be no Evening Mass in Lincoln on Easter Sunday.**

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

Please don't leave this until the last! Lent is a whole season of reconciliation, and there is Reconciliation on Saturday mornings after Mass; there is one more Station Mass, on 28th March at Woodhall Spa, with confessions from 7 till 8 pm; and there's a special Reconciliation Service at St Hugh's at 6 30 pm on Tuesday, April 4th. For real procrastinators Fr will be available on Holy Thursday and from 10 am on Holy Saturday

Stations of the Cross

We walk the Stations before Mass every Friday during Lent, at 9 30 am. It's good to see so many people there; and at 6 30 pm on Wednesdays at Bardney.

Let us make Easter what it should be as far as we can: it is our true treasure. *Fr Philip*