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## *Holy Week 2007*

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*  
by the Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler,  
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip**

What will you be doing during Holy Week? It's a week away. I realize that some of us will be out of town while our children are on Spring Break. For others of us, our businesses call us away almost any week of the year. Strangely enough this year, the Atlanta Braves also begin their regular season during Holy Week!

But the Cathedral of St. Philip will be calling us to experience, once again, both the tragedy and the glory of Jesus Christ our Lord. This week of the year, more than any other, invites us to take a journey of several days. It is not just one sermon that makes Holy Week holy. It is not just one prayer. It is not just one piece of music. Rather, it is the very drama of Jesus's last days on earth that is re-enacted at the Cathedral.

I invite you to join the Church this season. Join us on April 1, Palm Sunday, also called "The Sunday of the Passion." We will gather in the front drive, the Horseshoe Drive, at both the 8:45 and 11:15 am services. After blessing palm branches, we will parade around the front of the Cathedral, waving the branches and remembering Jesus's entrance into the holy city of Jerusalem. It's actually great fun to walk together around the church! Wear your walking shoes!

But the Palm Sunday service always takes a sheer turn once we hear the gospel. On that Sunday, the entire passion story of Jesus is read as the gospel. Typically, we-the congregation, all of us-play the part of the crowd who shout out "Crucify him!" with respect to Jesus. Yes, we-the crowd, the congregation-we are the ones who both welcome Jesus wildly and suddenly speak against him. Thus, we actually experience the betrayal of Jesus; we do not just hear about it.

Thursday, April 5 is Maundy Thursday. The word "Maundy" is derived from a Latin word, "mandatum," meaning "commandment." That is the night, at the Last Supper, when Jesus gives his disciples a "new commandment," that we love one another. As Jesus stopped to wash the feet of his disciples on that night, so we, too, will take the time to wash another person's feet. At the Cathedral, we do not merely stage this re-enactment. We invite folks, voluntarily, during the service, to ask another person if they might wash his or her feet. Wear clean socks, or no socks, on that night! Someone might ask to wash your feet. The Maundy Thursday continues with a Eucharist that commemorates the Last Supper; then, as the lights are dimmed, clergy and altar guild strip the altar, clearing the way for Good Friday. This is one of the most moving services of the year.

On Good Friday, of course, we remember the crucifixion itself. Once again, we hear the passion story read in its entirety. Good Friday is one of the only days of the year that we do not celebrate the Eucharist. Instead, the service is highlighted by the passion itself, by our prayers and petitions, and by the entrance of a large wooden cross at the end of the service. In silence, in music, and in prayers, we venerate the cross on that day.

Holy Saturday is another day that we do not celebrate the Eucharist. The body of Jesus is in the tomb on that day. But the activity around the Cathedral has become almost like a mini-Easter for me and the staff. I am in awe of the great gifts and talents that show up to rehearse and prepare for Easter Day. Musicians, flower guild folks, altar guild folks, acolytes, lectors, vergers, and all sorts gather on Saturday for the great rehearsal. The preparation for Easter can be just as exciting as Easter itself!

Finally, of course, comes Easter Day. Every service is tremendous and overflowing with Easter energy; and we have a service going on at almost any time you arrive! But the grandest service, and the most dramatic, is the one that begins very early on Easter morning, during the dark, and before sunrise.

At 6:00 am, on Easter morning, we light the first Easter fire on the lawn back out on the Horseshoe Drive, where we began the drama seven days earlier. This time, we are completing the drama. We process the Paschal Candle in the dark nave, we sing the ancient and lovely Exultet, we hear the old stories of Creation, of the Red Sea Exodus, and of the Valley of Dry Bones. Then we baptize new Christians into this ancient mystery of creation, redemption, and new life.

Finally on Easter morning, we celebrate the Eucharist itself. The service is beautiful and life-giving, for sure. But Easter morning is really the last chapter of a drama that takes an entire week to complete. I invite, and I urge, you to participate as fully as you can this Holy Week. When you have lived through Palm Sunday and Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, then you are prepared to know Easter in a way you have never known Easter before.

Thus, Holy Week is the entire Christian story, played out in prayer and procession, word and song, cross and sacrament, water and fire. May God bless us once again as we celebrate life, and also as we celebrate new life.

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