



Highlights of a Holy Week

Members of the Holy Cross congregation were asked to write about their experiences during the events of Holy Week, 2008. Here are some of their deliberations.

I think that for me the key is the progression of services held at Holy Cross. Firstly, attending Compline each evening of Holy Week provides a focus amidst a busy, working week. It takes very little time but is such good preparation for everything to come.

Then the Maundy Thursday service feels so very important, giving as it does the very foundation of our Sunday services throughout the year. Following that I find the wonderful peace of the Old Church during the vigil an experience literally beyond compare.

I can't say I enjoyed the veneration of the Cross on Friday; despite your efforts to encourage us not to dwell on the pain of the crucifixion I always find the service so painfully humbling. Tenebrae, on the other hand, was very uplifting. I think we all found it a very welcome and moving innovation this year, definitely to be repeated next year please.

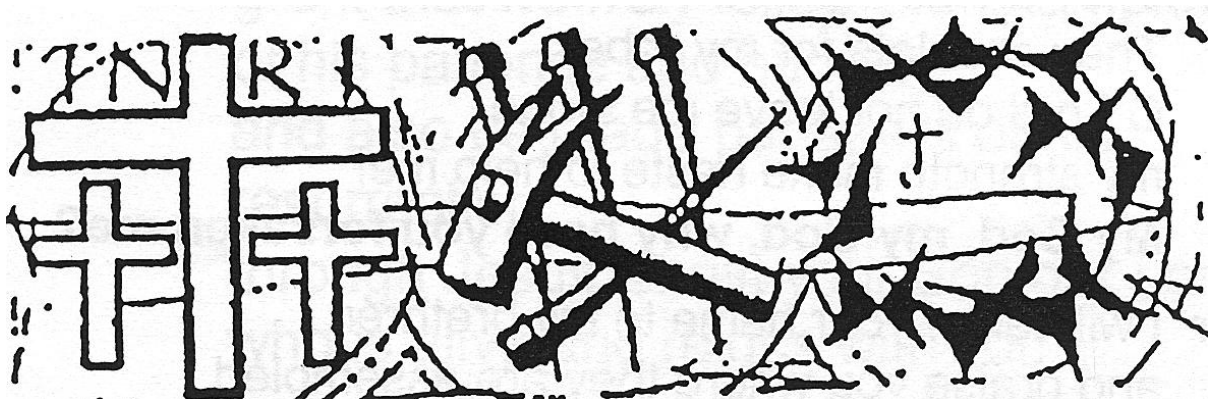
Finally, Easter Sunday, the most important day of the year, with its succession of services, starting before dawn. I never want to get up but I am always very pleased that I do!

My only sadness is that such a small proportion of the congregation come to the Holy Week services - or any of the special 'mid-week' services that are held throughout the year. Although I notice that once they have 'given it a try' most people discover the benefits of not limiting worship to an hour on Sundays and continue to return to other services year after year.

Rosemary Abernethy

A few people mentioned the Tenebrae service to me. I think the invitation to the wider parish was also a highlight since it produced 4 people who may come back again.

Christeen George



In the stillness of the evening: reflections on Holy Week 2008

For singers in church choirs Holy Week is the busiest week of the year with several services and lots of music. Much of the music the choir has been singing for the twenty-five years or more that I have been a member and could become stale. Despite the repetitions I still find singing the words of Jesus in the Good Friday gospel a great responsibility. As a choir member it is always difficult to prevent the organisation of the service getting in the way of involvement in the service, and so my memories of this Holy Week centre on those services where there was little or no music.

Frances and I were able to attend Compline throughout the week and to participate in Tenebrae on the Friday evening. There was a small group of us each evening for Compline – the same people most evenings, and it brought to life that promise that “where two or three are gathered together in thy Name thou will grant their requests”. We sat round the font, there was no fuss, we said the service, sung an unaccompanied hymn, kept church business to a minimum and then went home. These occasions combined quietude, reflection and companionship, and provided an opportunity to review the happenings of the day and put them into perspective.

Neil had suggested that we might replace Compline on Good Friday with Tenebrae (the Latin term for Shadows) a traditional service for Holy Week. The church owned a tenebrae stand with holders for 13 candles and Peter Fuller kindly refurbished it for us. So following a brief rehearsal, we gathered in a candle-lit old church and listened to Matthew’s recounting of the narrative of Jesus’s trial and death as the candles were extinguished one by one. The last reading took place with only the smallest light to read by. The crash of cymbals in the darkness to mark Jesus’s death and the rending of the curtain in the temple was hugely powerful. The words were so familiar – we had read them on Palm Sunday – but developed a new intensity in that quiet and dark church where there were no distractions. At the end we went away quietly.

Thank you Neil for suggesting the service and all those who took part.

Peter Hounsell



A Tenebrae candle holder