

## **Each day of the Holy Week has its specific theme:**

**HOLY MONDAY** - On Holy Monday, the scriptures help us remember the story of Creation, of man's fall into sinfulness as well as the story of the barren fig tree, which Christ withered because it bore no fruit. On this day, the faithful are invited to remember the lesson that we are created in the image of God, and we are called to examine our inner selves and with clean hearts and thoughts to renew our faithfulness and transform our lives and bear the fruits of virtue.

**HOLY TUESDAY** - On Holy Tuesday we read the story of the ten maidens, five of whom were wise enough to bring extra oil for their lamps while they were waiting for the bridegroom to come and take them to a wedding feast. This parable conveys the message of the last Judgment and appeal to us that we must always be ready and prepared for the coming of Christ.

**HOLY WEDNESDAY** - On Holy Wednesday we remember two contrasting lessons; the betrayal of Jesus, and the worshipful anointing of Jesus' feet to show love and respect for Him. Examining our lives and comparing them with the two types of contrasting acts, the church asks "What are you doing as a child of God? Are you betraying your Lord with your actions or are you faithfully and lovingly worshipping Him?"

**MAUNDY THURSDAY** - There are three services on Maundy Thursday, symbolizing three different events in the last days of the earthly ministry of Christ. The morning service commemorates The Last Supper, at which Jesus instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist by giving Holy Communion to His disciples. In the afternoon the Washing of the Feet service takes place, commemorating the humility and service of our Lord Jesus Christ in washing the feet of His disciples. The somber Vigil service is held in the evening, commemorating the betrayal, arrest, trial, and suffering of Christ. Twelve candles are lit and at the completion of each order of Scripture readings two of the candles are extinguished. After the Bible readings, the lights of the church are dimmed. A single candle is left to remind us of Christ's singular presence in the darkness. The service of Maundy Thursday prepares us to remember the suffering and crucifixion of our Lord on Good Friday.

**GOOD FRIDAY** - Good Friday is the most somber day of the Christian calendar. On this day we commemorate the crucifixion and burial of Jesus. The tomb of Christ is recreated and decorated with flowers brought by parishioners. The tomb is placed in front of the Church altar and at the end of the service, parishioners circle the tomb to offer prayers and take one flower home with them from the tomb.

**EASTER EVE** - Easter Eve, or "lighting of the candles", as it is known in the Armenian Church, is celebrated with Divine Liturgy. During this service we read from the Old Testament, specifically the story of the creation of the world in Genesis. This reminds us that when we celebrate the Resurrection of Christ, we are celebrating the creation of the new life that Jesus gave us. Other biblical passages of deliverance are read foreshadowing God's victory over death and evil, at the same time preparing us to receive and celebrate Christ's victory over death and His Resurrection. The lighting of candles is held at the conclusion of Divine Liturgy and faithful return to their homes with lit candles in hand to illuminate their homes with the light of Christ.

**EASTER SUNDAY** - "Christ is risen from the dead! He trampled down death by death, and by His resurrection He granted life to us. Glory to Him for all ages". With the services of Easter Sunday, the whole mood of the church changes. We have been sad and solemn during Lent and Holy Week. Now, with the celebration of Christ's Resurrection and the new life that He gives us, everything becomes bright and joyful. The words Christ is Risen from the Dead are happily declared again and again during the service. Everyone wants to receive Holy Communion, to share in the gift of new life. All has been changed, and death can no longer defeat us because we, as true and faithful followers of Christ, have been promised that we may share in His everlasting life. On this day we read the Gospel story of how the women who went to anoint Christ's body in the tomb found out that He had risen from the grave. At Easter we recall and relive the most important event in human history, Jesus Christ's victory over death. This is in fact the foundation and cornerstone of Christianity and Christian faith, and at the same time Christ's Resurrection is the strongest affirmation of God's unlimited power even over death.