

Holy Week

Would you ever think that one short week could change history forever, or that it could still affect you now even though it happened long, long ago? The week in this story did. It is Holy Week, Jesus' last week on earth. He would appear to his followers again, but not quite as the same man they had always known.

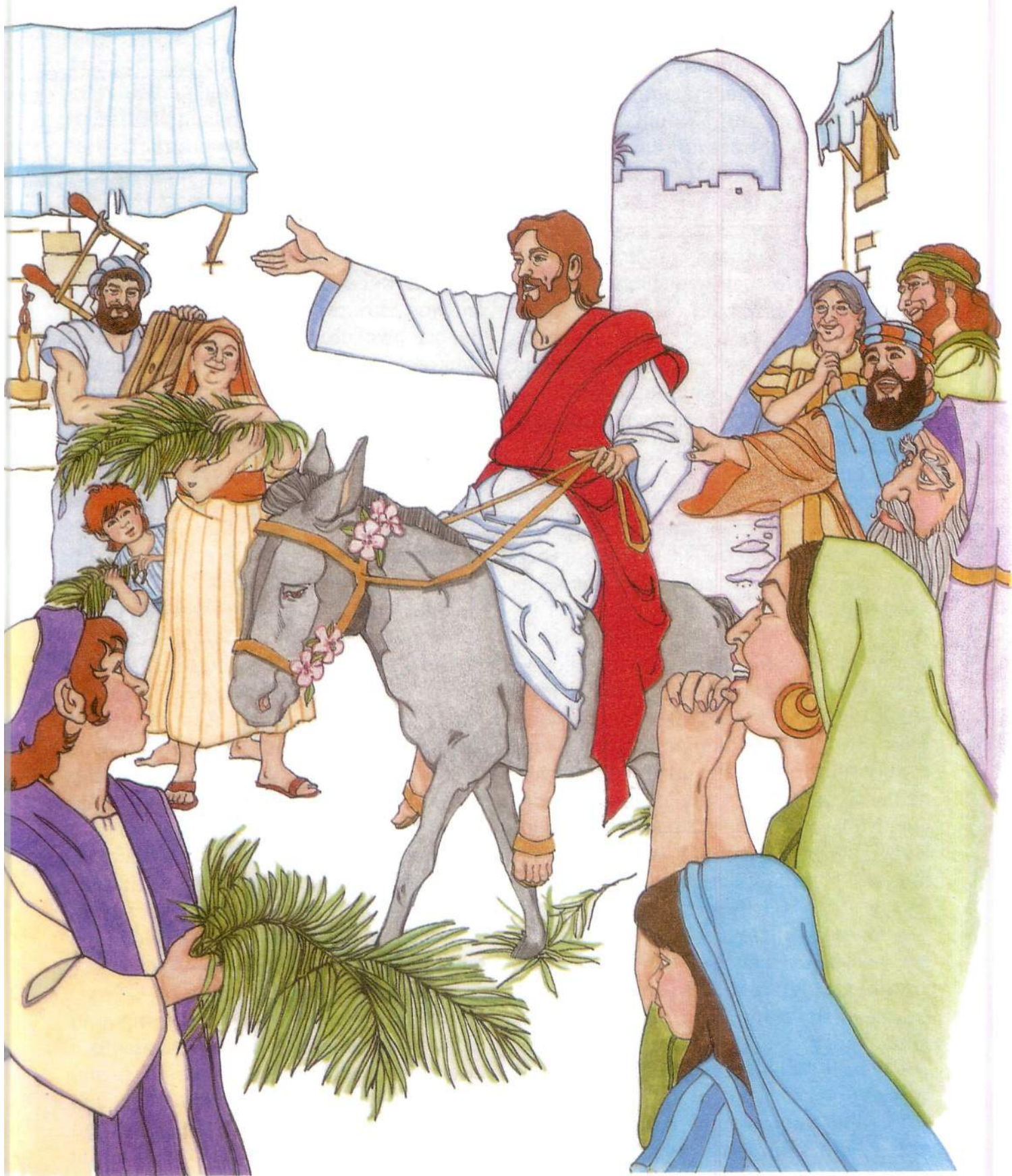
Palm Sunday. Jesus rode into Jerusalem, the central city of God's chosen people. He had been there before and many people knew him. It would soon be Passover, so the city was crowded with many visitors. Some of these people also knew Jesus from the time when he had come to their towns. The people saw him coming and rushed out into the streets. They were very excited. They waved palm branches in the air like flags. They spread their cloaks on the path in front of Jesus just as we roll out a red carpet for visiting dignitaries today. They wanted to show Jesus the respect they had for him because they knew he was sent by God.

Monday. Jesus did not stay in the city overnight. He stayed at a friend's home nearby. But early Monday morning he went to the temple in Jerusalem to preach about God's love. Many people wanted to hear what Jesus said and they crowded into the temple. The

Pharisees were the Jewish religious leaders, who usually taught at the temple. They didn't like Jesus but they were afraid to send him away because so many people had come to hear him. They tried to think of a way to get rid of him. Jesus saw many things happening at the temple that were not as God would have liked it. He saw people selling pigeons. They were making big profits by taking advantage of the good people who wanted to pray and give an offering. Jesus overturned the sellers' tables, and said that God's house was not for people like them.

Tuesday and Wednesday. Each of these days Jesus again went into Jerusalem to teach at the temple. This is when he gave us the Two Great Commandments. Every day the Sadducees, another group of Hebrew religious leaders, and the Pharisees tried to trick Jesus, and make the crowds reject his teachings. But each time Jesus gave them the right answer and the Sadducees and Pharisees became more and more worried that they would lose control of the people.

Holy Thursday. Now it was Passover. Jesus and his disciples made plans to celebrate the Israelites' freedom from Egypt. Jesus told his followers to go to



a certain house and make things ready there. The house had an upper room just right for this special meal. The disciples didn't realize that this would be the last supper they would have with the Lord. As they entered the room, someone would have to wash their feet as was the custom in those days. Usually a servant would do this, but there were none there. "Who will wash our feet?" one of the disciples asked. Jesus said, "I will." And he did! The disciples felt ashamed that their leader would do such a lowly job. One of them said, "Let me do it." But Jesus said no. He wanted to show them how to be humble and how they must be willing to serve others.

As they got ready to eat, Jesus blessed the bread and thanked God for it. He said, "Take, eat. This is my body, to be given for you." Then he blessed some wine and gave thanks to God. He said, "Drink ye all of this. This is my blood which seals God's covenant. Do this in memory of me." This was the very first Holy Communion. This was the beginning of the new covenant and the end of the old covenant. Soon Jesus would die on the cross for us. He would pay our debt to God. The old way of life would be dead for us. The new life would begin on Easter.

After dinner, Jesus wanted to pray. He asked his disciples to go with him to the Garden of Gethsemane where he could be alone. The disciples were supposed to stay awake and pray too, but they fell asleep because they were very, very tired. Soon they heard soldiers and a crowd of people coming. The soldiers arrested Jesus and took him to the house of the chief Pharisee.

They questioned Jesus, but could not get him to say anything wrong.

Good Friday. The Pharisees still tried to get rid of Jesus. They sent him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Palestine. Pilate could not find that Jesus had done anything against Roman law. But crowds of people led by the Pharisees and Sadducees shouted, "Kill him. Crucify him!" So Pilate agreed because he did not want the crowds to riot. Jesus was forced to carry his own cross to Golgotha, the hill where crucifixions were done. Jesus fell and a man named Simon of Cyrene came out of the crowd to help him carry the cross. At Golgotha, Jesus was nailed to the cross and the cross was raised next to two criminals who were also being crucified that day. One laughed at Jesus, but the other asked Jesus to forgive his sins. Jesus said, "Today you will be with me in Paradise." Jesus' mother Mary and his friend John stayed at the foot of the cross to be with him. Jesus said to Mary, "He is your son." And he said to John, "She is your mother." Jesus knew John would care for his mother as if she were his own. Jesus said other things. He asked God to forgive the people who crucified him because he knew they did not know what they were doing. After a time of cruel suffering, Jesus gave his soul to God and died.

Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus' body and buried it in a tomb he had built for himself. Guards were put around the tomb because Jesus promised he would return on the third day. The Pharisees did not want the disciples to steal the body and claim that Jesus had risen.

Holy Saturday. The disciples were sad and afraid. They still had not fully understood all that Jesus had told them about what would happen. They thought Jesus was gone forever. They feared they would be killed too. They stayed together and tried to figure out

what to do. Jesus had told them to wait for him.

Tradition tells us that Jesus met with all those who had died since the beginning of the earth. He preached to them and gave them a chance to choose to follow him to the Kingdom of God.

REFLECTION FOR HOLY WEEK —

A Choral Reading

Class divides into three groups.

Group 1 reads *Children*

Group 2 reads *Narration*

Group 3 reads *Jesus*

All groups read *All*

All boys read *Pharisees*

All girls read *Women*

Children

Triumphantly Jesus enters Jerusalem.

(pause)

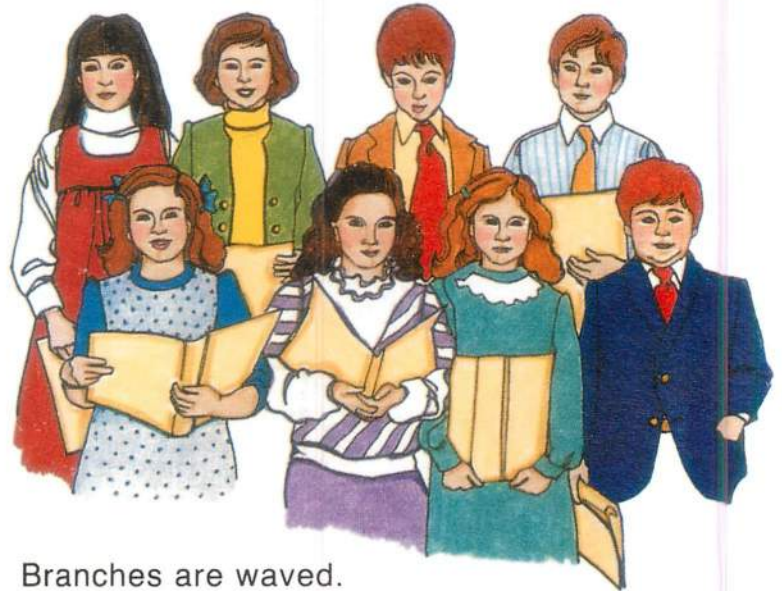
Narration

Did you ever dream that you were
there?

You smiled at him to show you care.
Did he speak to you? Did you answer
him?

If not, it's time for your dream to begin.
(pause)

Excitement! Shouts! A joyful noise!
Coats are spread by girls and boys.



Branches are waved.

Music is played.

All

You think Jerusalem rejoices,
Until you hear angry voices.

Pharisees

Teacher, scold your disciples who
shout.

Jesus

If these were silent, the very stones
would cry out!

Children

Hosannah, Jesus! We love you.

Jesus

I was once a child, too.

Children

It is Holy Thursday.

(pause)

Narration

It is evening and Jesus and his disciples are at the table. You can see them through your dream window as much as you are able.

All

He took bread, and when he had given thanks he said . . .

Jesus

Take this and eat it. Soon I will be gone.

All

He took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said then . . .

Jesus

Take this and drink it. I will live again.

Children

It is Good Friday.

(pause)

Narration

A cruel scene, too cruel for a dream. "Let him be crucified," you hear them scream.

They nailed him to the cross.

What a terrible loss.

All

And when he was dead, Joseph of Arimathea said, "Give me his body to place in my

tomb."

And that's what was done in sorrow and gloom.

Narration

And then they rushed home, confused and afraid.

The guards watched the tomb where the body was laid.

Children

It is Easter Sunday.

(pause)

Narration

Your dream is suddenly filled with light. Morning has come from that terrible night.

Women

Hurry. Let us go back to the tomb, To wrap up his body and rub on perfume.

But who will help us roll away the great stone?

Narration

But when they got there they were not alone.

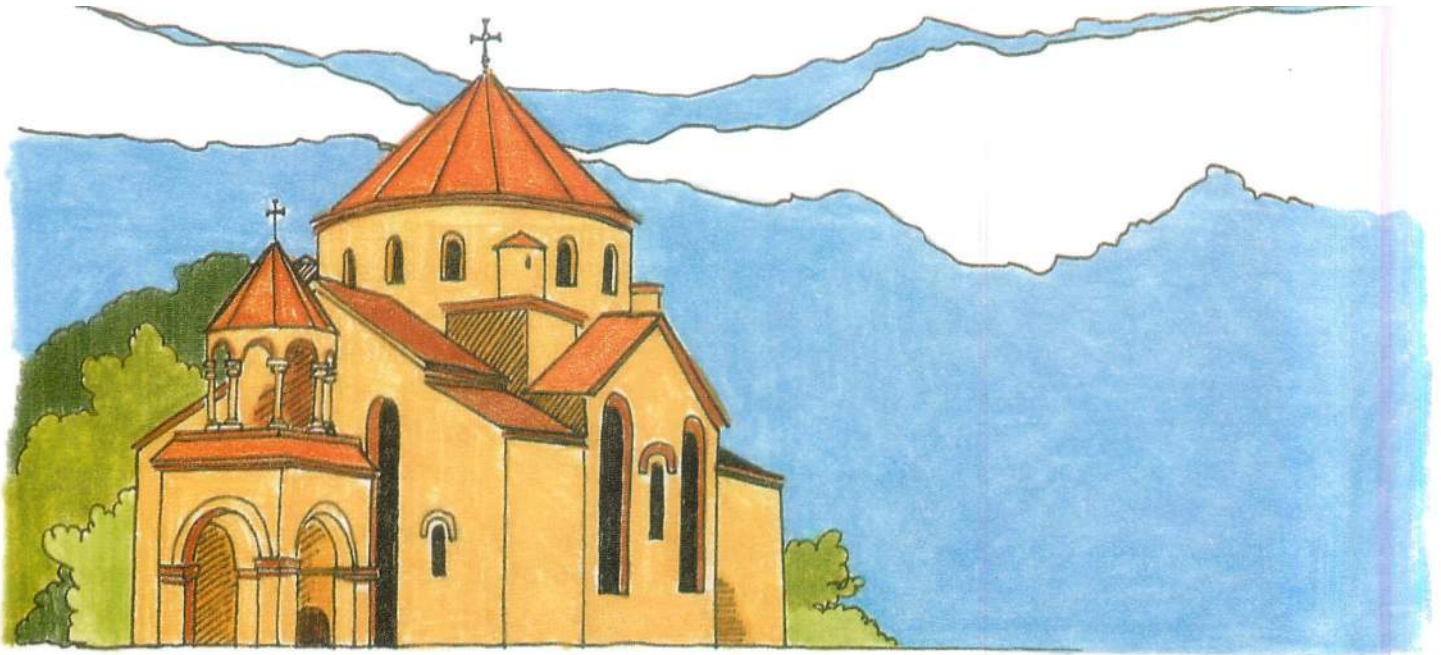
The stone was gone and an angel stood there.

He told them the good news they must share,

"Jesus has risen, go tell his friends.

The Kingdom is yours is the message he sends."





SERVICES FOR HOLY WEEK IN THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

From Palm Sunday through Holy Saturday, the Church remembers the Lord's last days with special services. We go from the happiness of Palm Sunday's triumphal entry into Jerusalem to the great sadness of the crucifixion to the joyful celebration of the Resurrection!

Lent has ended but a new period of fasting begins after Palm Sunday. Services are held on Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. It is as if we were back in our Lord's time, living these last days with him.

Palm Sunday finds our churches decorated with palms and people coming to church happy and excited. The black curtain is taken away and the beautiful altar is used to celebrate Divine Liturgy. After liturgy the special service of TURUNPATZEK is done. The priest kneels outside the curtain and with a wooden hammer knocks on a piece of

wood on the bema. He asks that God open the doors of his Kingdom. He asks God to be merciful to us. The deacon opens the curtain and welcomes us into the Kingdom God has prepared for those who love him.

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday pass with no special church services, but the church is being prepared for the three days to come.

Holy Thursday morning a special Divine Liturgy is performed to commemorate the first Holy Communion our Lord shared with his disciples. The priest does not give a sermon, but instead reads a letter written long ago by St. Basil. The letter explains Holy Communion and tells why we should take part in it.

In the evening, Vodunluva (Washing of the Feet) is done. The priest, without cape and crown, washes and anoints the feet of those representing the disci-

ples. We remember that Jesus did not let pride stand in the way of helping people.

After the Washing of the Feet, the church is set up for the next service, Khavaroom. This service puts us with Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. The church is gradually darkened; all the candles are extinguished. The Lenten altar is back in place. We remember the arrest and trial of our Lord. We think of how Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus and how Peter denied knowing him. We remember the times when we did the same kinds of things.

Good Friday afternoon there is a short service to commemorate the three hours Christ hung on the cross. A symbolic tomb is set up in the chancel. Some churches have a fancy tomb while others use a box like a coffin draped in black.

In the evening the service for the Entombment of Our Lord (Taghman Gark) is held. Often members of the parish donate flowers for the tomb. One of the special hymns sung for this service tells how Joseph of Arimathea requested the right to bury Jesus. At the end of the Service, the people come forward, kiss the cross, and take home flowers from the tomb.

Holy Saturday evening the joyous celebration of Easter begins with Divine Liturgy. In Jesus' time the new day began at sundown so Saturday night was regarded as the beginning of Sunday. Since our Lord rose on Sunday, the resurrection celebration begins Saturday night. It is an especially happy badarak. After the service is finished, many parishes have choreg and Easter eggs together to celebrate as one family in Christ.



Holy Week
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