

VISION FOR ACTION – MISSION

Questions about Church you've always wanted answered but don't like to ask!!

These questions are now being answered over time in The Pinnacle. If you have such a question do let me know and we will try to provide answers in subsequent editions. If your question hasn't been answered yet look out for the response in future editions!

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This month we look at some questions that have been asked as we prepared to celebrate Holy Week and looked towards Easter Day.

What is Passiontide?

The fifth Sunday of Lent marks the beginning of the two weeks of Passiontide, during which the Church commemorates the sufferings of our Lord during the last days of his earthly life.

Why do we keep Holy Week?

The sixth Sunday of Lent, also known as Palm Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week, which is a time of special devotion to the Passion of Christ. Special services are held to help us to walk the way of the Cross in our worship.

From where does Maundy Thursday get its name?

Its name comes from the Latin phrase *mandatum novum* that means new command. This comes from the new commandment to love one another that was given to the disciples by Jesus at the Last Supper in the night when he was betrayed and the day before he was crucified. In addition to this new commandment, Jesus demonstrated to the disciples their calling as servants by washing their feet. During the Supper, he commanded them to break the bread and eat, to bless the cup and drink in remembrance of him, sharing therefore in his Body and Blood, soon to be broken and poured out on the cross. In this way the Eucharist was instituted and has been celebrated ever since in the Christian Church.

Why is the day Jesus was crucified called Good Friday?

It is known as "Good" because on that day Jesus achieved the salvation of humanity.

We say that Jesus rose on the third day – wouldn't that be Monday?

The Feast of the Resurrection of Christ, the day on which Christ's followers found the tomb empty, is the greatest and oldest feast of the Christian Church. The "third" day is Sunday – and not Monday as our present method of counting days would suggest - because in Jesus' time the day on which an event happened- in this case "Good Friday" - was counted as the first day.

What is Maundy Money?

In England today, the Queen follows a very traditional role of giving Maundy Money to a group of pensioners. The tradition of the Sovereign giving money to the poor dates from the 13th century, from the reign of Edward I. At one time recipients were required to be of the same sex as the Sovereign, but since the eighteenth century they have numbered as many men and women as the Sovereign has years of age.

Every year on this day, the Queen attends a Royal Maundy service in one of the many cathedrals throughout the country. 'Maundy money' is distributed to male and female pensioners from local communities near the Cathedral where the Service takes place. Yeomen of the Guards carry the Maundy Money in white and red leather purses on golden alms trays on their heads. The white purse contains the Maundy money - silver pennies, twopences, threepences and fourpences. The red purse contains a small allowance (£5.50 this year), which was originally for clothing and provisions.

From the fifteenth century, the amount of Maundy Money handed out, and the number of people receiving the coins, is related to the years of the Sovereign's life. In 2009, 83 male and 83 female pensioners will receive 83p in Maundy Money, because the Queen is 83 years old this year. The men and women who will receive the specially minted coins personally from the Queen are all retired pensioners recommended by clergy and ministers of all denominations, in recognition of service to the Church and to the community. This year's service is being held in Suffolk at St Edmundsbury Cathedral.

Where does the name 'Easter' come from?

Pagan traditions give us the English word "Easter" which comes from the word "Eostre". The Anglo-Saxon word for April was "Eostre-monath" (the month of openings). However, it should be remembered that Christians celebrated the resurrection of Christ long before the word "Easter" was used, and the word they used for the celebration was "Pascha", which is derived from and linked to the Jewish festival of Passover.

According to Bede, the English monastic historian, the English word Easter comes from the Anglo Saxon name for the month of April which was known as "Eostremonath" in the AngloSaxon tongue and since Pascha was most often celebrated in Eostremonath, the English Christians began calling it "Easter". Bede also notes that the month was named after the Anglo-Saxon goddess Esostre.

Rituals related to the goddess Eostre focus on new beginnings, symbolized by the Easter egg, and fertility, which is symbolized by the hare (or Easter bunny).