

## From Rev. Willie J. Smith

### Holy Week

Lent ends on Saturday March 28, which is known in Eastern Church as **Lazarus Saturday**. We are all familiar with the Gospel Story of Lazarus being raised from the dead by Jesus. The scene is set for what will take us into Holy Week, a period in which we are invited to participate in the last days of Jesus' life. There are liturgies that occur during the week that are different and taken from the writings of woman name Egeria. Egeria was a Spanish nun from the 4<sup>th</sup> century who went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. She witnessed and recorded the services of Holy Week or "Bright Week as she called it. The Services are one long continuous event with breaks for rest and meals. These services are so intimate in that we are connected to those pilgrims, of Egeria time, to the present.

The services of Thursday through Saturday of that week are known as the "**Triduum**" or "**The Three Great Days**". There is no Entrance or Recessional hymn; no blessing. The focus is on the events leading up to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.



The week begins with **Palm Sunday**, the commemoration of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, which begins in triumph and ends betrayal. Hosanna is said, shout, sung which is a prayer that means **O God Save Us**.

Tuesday is the Gospel story of feet being anointed with spikenard, an oil that is costly and known for its healing properties. In most Episcopal Dioceses, the clergy gather with

their Bishop for a Chrism Mass.

At the Mass the clergy with the Bishop renew the vows and receive blessed **Chrism** and **Healing Oils**. The **Chrism Oil** is used for those who are to be Baptized or Confirmed and **Healing** is used for Pastoral Services.



**The Three Great Days** are **Maundy Thursday (Holy Thursday)** in



which Jesus prayed for the oneness of the Church and instituted the Eucharist. The service consist of foot-washing (hand washing in some places), the Eucharist and the Stripping of the Altar. The Passion Gospels tell the story of Jesus' betrayal, arrest and trial before the Jewish /Roman authorities. The Altar is stripped to symbolize any preference to Jesus be bare. Maundy comes from the word **Mandatum** which means **command**.

Jesus's commandment to love one another as he has loved us.

**Good Friday** is a day of silence and prayer. There is no Eucharist, no singing, no bell ringing. Prayers are offered and the Communion offered from the Eucharist from Holy Thursday.

**Holy Saturday** a day of quiet in preparation for Easter. The Eastern Church believes that Christ descended to Hell to free those who have died. In the Creed there is reference "he descended into Hell". Baptisms take place the

Easter Vigil, a service of Scripture Readings, music and celebration of the Resurrection. The 50 Days of Easter.

