

Holy Week 2009

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

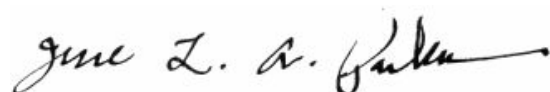
We now enter into “contemplation of those mighty acts” whereby we have been given life and immortality. Holy Week is a week-long meditation upon what it means to “be saved”. When Evangelical Christians demand to know whether or not you have “been saved”, many Anglicans panic and feel defensive. While it is impertinent and off-putting to be asked so directly by a stranger, it is a fair enough question from someone genuinely concerned about your spiritual well-being. So, *are* you “saved”?

The “mighty acts” of Holy Week refer to the extraordinary courage of Jesus of Nazareth, who chose to preach his gospel in the face of mounting official opposition. They refer to the formidable strength of will and character with which he submitted to humiliation and slander in order to be faithful to the truth. These mighty acts refer to how Jesus, broken-hearted and with events spiralling out of his control, was able to establish a sure means by which his disciples could unite themselves to him beyond the death he saw coming for himself. They refer to the excruciating exercise of abject submission to blatant evil and agonising death as a way of destroying them from the inside. They refer to the tremendous act of God which triumphs still over every evil and destroys even death itself, for those who believe. In uniting ourselves to that same power which animated Jesus to do what he did and which raised him from the dead, we too rise and are “saved” through him, for we unite ourselves to God Almighty.

God does indeed save us in Christ: from the nexus of selfishness into which we are born; from the snares of our own past; the vanities, falsehood, and sin of our present; and from a future of futility, death, and oblivion which a life apart from God holds. Through Jesus’ will and strength, his self-sacrifice, his opening of our eyes to the indwelling Spirit of God, we are saved when we embrace them ourselves. This Holy Week keeps us close to the Cross and close to the Love which animated Jesus, who now lives and reigns. Repeatedly, Jesus told us of the power of God in us. Revealing the power of God in himself and in us, these mighty acts of Jesus, which we contemplate, save us.

Taking our religion seriously requires of us some effort and sacrifice. The Passion of Jesus makes it clear that the Way of the Cross, is not the “Way of Convenience”. We are to observe this week individually and as a community in the Catholic Church, contemplating these mighty acts and our salvation. Each of us, therefore, needs to make the time to share in it. Certainly, on Thursday, each of us needs to be present to renew our personal and communal covenant with Jesus Christ in the holy Sacrament of his Body and Blood. On Friday each of us needs to be present to have laid before us, personally and as a Church, what Jesus did for us on that day. On Saturday night, we each need to join our pilgrim-Church to contemplate how God has saved us in the past and brought us to our present, and future, resurrection. *Each* of us needs to be present at these times to bind ourselves closer to God in Jesus, *and also to each other* in his Spirit. We also need to call those who by infirmity or employment cannot be present. Let them know that, in the spirit of this Holy Week, they are in our hearts and we carry them with us on the journey.

Make the effort. Join in the contemplation. Join in the commemorations. And have a most blessed Easter-tide— for the rest of your saved eternity!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jesse L. A. Parker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

(The Rev'd) Jesse L. A. Parker, *Rector*