

Tantur Ecumenical Institute (TEI)



We celebrate Holy Week with presentations and reflections that mark the significance of each day of Great and Holy Week according to various traditions of the Christian churches of the Holy Land. We begin with Palm Sunday on the Mount of Olives and end on Holy Saturday in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher with a special focus on the Holy Fire. Each daily session will conclude with some spiritual reflections from our presenters at Tantur.

Palm Sunday: The Mount of Olives

The Mount of Olives separates the desert from the city. In the desert there is a disconnection from daily life; there is a shortage of food and water; a person is yearning for God's presence. The city is a bustling place with people, markets, traffic, and noise. The Mount of Olives is the threshold, a liminal space between two different places. The Mount of Olives is a place of the "between". Jesus entered the city from The Mount of Olives and the Gospels reflect the tension between the joy of his followers singing, "Hosanna! Hosanna!" and Jesus' weeping over the future destruction. On our tour, we will follow the Palm Sunday route, and visit sites on the slopes of the Mount of Olives

Holy Monday: Parable of the Ten Virgins

On Monday of Holy Week, the Syriac liturgical tradition holds a prayer on the parable in Chapter 25 of the Gospel of St. Matthew on the 10 virgins with the oil lamps. This parable is seen as a "door" for the faithful to enter into the mystery of Holy Week. Some parts of this lovely prayer tradition from the Syriac Catholic Church in Jerusalem will be presented and explained to you by Deacon Frederic Masson our program director, followed by a time of spiritual reflection and input from our presenters at Tantur.

Holy Tuesday: The Anointing of Jesus

Marcie Lenk and Stephanie Saldana will be speaking about the prophetic voices of women in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. Who are these women, who dare to say aloud what others will not say? Marcie will be speaking about the widow of Zarephath, and Stephanie will be speaking about Martha and Mary. Together they will explore what these Biblical women have to teach us about a radical honesty in front of issues of life and death.

Holy Wednesday: The Passover (Pesach) and Seder Meal

One of the most widespread practices in Jewish communities throughout the world is holding a Seder on the first night (or, outside of Israel, the first and second nights) of Passover. Dr. Debbie Weissman will use texts, art and music to explore some of the meanings of the Seder ritual.

Holy Thursday: Praying with Jesus in Gethsemane

The challenge of Holy Week and the Triduum is to fully live these moments in the life of Jesus with him. We are not spectators in a play but rather we are invited to participate fully in the dramatic action that is unfolding. A central moment is Jesus's prayer in Gethsemane; his prayer must become our own. Reading the account of this prayer, from the Gospel of St. Mark, Fr. David Neuhaus, S.J. will assist us in understanding the significance of the prayer and its context after Mr. Nizar Halloun's virtual tour of this Garden.

Good Friday: The Crucifixion and Burial of Jesus

We have followed the Way of the Cross on the Fridays of Lent. Today's presentation by Nizar Halloun will focus on the last five "stations" of the Way of the Cross as portrayed in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem: Jesus being stripped of His garments, His crucifixion, His death on the Cross, His being taken down from the cross and preparation for burial, and His being laid in the tomb. This presentation will deepen our understanding of the spirituality underlying these particular events of the Crucifixion and the special significance that the Church of the Holy Sepulcher has for the various churches given oversight of this holy place.

Holy Saturday: Saturday of Light

On Saturday before Pascha (Easter Sunday), Christians from the Holy Land and across the world gather in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, to attend the Holy Light ceremony, a major religious event hosted by the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate and its Brotherhood for more than a millennium. But, what is the significance of the Holy Light for the thousands of local and visiting Christians who eagerly anticipate it every year? Join us in this presentation by Dr. George Tsourous, an anthropologist working with Jerusalem's Christians, who will be exploring the proceedings of this feast with us as well as the significance and impact of the Holy Light on the relations between different Christians.