**Times and Seasons**

**Part 2 – Lent, Holy Week and Easter**

**Section 6**

**Appendix**

Mothering Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent)

***Blessing of a Simnel Cake***

*The Simnel Cake is a light fruit cake made with spices and layers of marzipan. It usually has eleven marzipan balls placed on top of the cake said to represent the 11 apostles (excluding Judas). This cake is traditionally associated with Mothering Sunday. The meaning of the word 'simnel' is unclear but may refer to the use of fine flour. This prayer may be used at the end of the main celebration of the day or when gathering for refreshments.*

We bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth,

for all the gifts you have freely given,

and all the people who have shown us your loving care.

May all who receive this *(these)* Simnel Cake*(s)*

know your great goodness

and the sweet fragrance of your love,

and be assured of our gratitude for all they have given us.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Sul y Blodau

Visiting the Graveside on Palm Sunday

*The Palm Sunday Procession has, through the centuries, taken different forms in different countries. In Medieval times, the procession came to a halt at the Church door. While the clergy sang hymns and antiphons, the congregation dispersed among the tombs, each family kneeling at the grave of relatives. The celebrant sprinkled holy water over the graveyard, and then the procession formed again and entered the church. In France and the UK, the custom of decorating graves and visiting the cemeteries on Palm Sunday is still retained, in preparation for Easter. Graves are often cleaned and weeded and decked with flowers and garlands: rosemary, rue, crocuses, daffodils and primroses. The custom is a strong symbol of our belief in the resurrection of the dead. In some countries it is a tradition to bless not only Palm branches but also various flowers of the season, hence the name "Flower Sunday" in many countries — 'Flowering Sunday' or 'Blossom Sunday" in England, 'Blumensonntag' in Germany, 'Pâsques Fleuris' in France, 'Pascua Florida' in Spain, 'Virágvasárnap' in Hungary, 'Cvetna' among the Slavic nations, 'Zaghkasart' in Armenia, and 'Sul y Blodau' ('Sunday of the Flowers') in many parts of Wales. On this day, new clothes are often worn.*

A Blessing of Flowers

*If this blessing occurs at a celebration of the Holy Eucharist, it may take place after the Prayer after Communion and before the Blessing and Dismissal of the people.*

*Sul y Blodau prayers may be used in the churchyard after the service or before a community gathering to decorate graves with flowers.*

***Introduction***

We have gathered in this place to begin our recalling of the solemn events of Holy Week and the celebration of our Salvation. We will soon disperse to our homes and many of us will visit the graves of loved ones for comfort and consolation and to prepare for the glory of Easter. So, let us ask God to bless the flowers we will use to decorate their graves that our hearts may be comforted by the joy of the resurrection of Christ from the dead and the assurance of eternal life.

***Prayer***

*Either:*

Loving Father,

on this day when Christ your Son

was hailed as the Messiah with Palm branches

and the singing of Hosannas,

we ask you to bless us and all those who

will use these flowers to decorate the graves

of their departed loved ones.

May their hearts be comforted by the presence of your Spirit,

and their faith strengthened in the hope of the resurrection of Christ from the dead,

for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. **Amen.**

*Or:*

Lord of the seasons, you bring new life from the earth, causing seeds to flourish from last year's dead plants; bless the flowers we bring to the graves of those we have loved, that they may be a sign to us of the new and eternal life you bring to us in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Prayers for use at the Graveside

*These prayers are offered for people to say at the graveside when visiting on Palm Sunday.*

Loving Father,

we rejoice in this springtime of your love,

when Jesus the Lord submitted humbly to death,

even death on a cross.

His rest in the grave has hallowed the graves of all who have believed in you.

His resurrection from the dead has brightened our hearts

with the hope of everlasting life.

As we bring colour to the graves of our departed loved ones

with flowers (and palm leaves)

may our faith flourish,

and our hearts grow in your love

so that we come at last to the glory of heaven,

the new and eternal Jerusalem,

where there is no sorrow or sighing

only life everlasting. **Amen.**

Lord Jesus, in you we have the sure and certain hope of resurrection to eternal life; we thank you for all those gone before us, who sowed in us the seeds of faith. May that faith flourish in us, that we may share your glory in our generation, and finally come to know the everlasting beauty, life and joy of your heavenly kingdom, where you reign with the Father and Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

*Other suitable prayers may be found in The Church in Wales Alternative Funeral Services.*

Good Friday

***Stations of the Cross***

*It is traditional that, on this day, the Stations of the Cross form part of the devotional activities of the day. Details may be found on page 26 of Section 2 – Lent.*

***A Prayer of Blessing of a Hot Cross Bun***

*Hot Cross buns are one of many Lenten and Good Friday traditions. Here a prayer is provided for use when hot cross buns are distributed in church - quite often at celebrations involving children.*

God our Father,

on this day of fasting and prayer,

when we stand at the cross of Jesus

and experience his saving love,

may all who receive these buns, marked with the cross,

be sustained in their fight against evil

and strengthened in their faithful witness;

through Jesus Christ the Lord. **Amen.**

Blessing of an Easter Garden

*The following may be used at the beginning of the Eucharist on Easter Day*

***Introduction***

On the first day of the week, when it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb. In the darkness of the early morning and filled with distress and deep sadness she failed to recognise Jesus, mistaking him for the gardener, until he called her name when her tears gave way to unmistakable joy.

Let us thank God for this Easter Garden, lovingly created so that all who set their eyes upon its beauty may be filled with the joy of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and know that he is alive for evermore, fulfilling his promises and raising our hearts and lives to God.

***Prayer***

Blessed are you Lord, God of all Creation,

in the garden of the empty Tomb

your Risen Son was met by Mary Magdalene,

whose distress was assuaged by the power of love

and whose sadness disappeared at the joy of her Lord alive for evermore.

Bless us and all who gaze upon this Easter Garden

that the darkness of our lives will be filled with light and life,

and the glory and joy of Easter possess our hearts with songs of Alleluia!

We ask this through Christ our Lord.  **Amen.**

Blessing of Easter Eggs

*The egg is a universal symbol of new life. Within the Christian tradition eggs are given and received as symbols of the resurrection of Christ. The tradition of Easter eggs may have been strengthened by its marking of the end of the Lenten fast, during which eggs were not allowed to be eaten. Easter Eggs are particularly popular in the Orthodox tradition, where eggs are boiled and dyed red (to symbolize the blood of Christ) and brought to the Easter Vigil where they are blessed by the priest. They are offered as a declaration of the resurrection of Christ and so are colourful signs of the new life Christ has won for us as he breaks the bonds of death and rises from the tomb.*

Lord God,

the symbols and signs of new life in Christ

fill the whole world:

bless us as we share these Easter eggs:

signs of life and hope,

simple reminders of Easter Joy.

May all who receive them

be filled with the joy of the resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord,

who is alive for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Blessing of Easter Food

*The custom of blessing food for Easter is one that arose naturally from the Lenten discipline of fasting and especially the fasting associated with the Holy Triduum. The first meal of Easter takes place after the Easter Vigil or First Eucharist of Easter Day and is particularly appropriate for churches who share an Easter Breakfast or Lunch together.*

***Reading***

*Isaiah 55:1-11*

***Prayer***

God of glory, Lord of Life,

we lift our eyes to you

as we celebrate Christ's victory over sin and death.

Bless us and this food of our first Easter Meal.

May we who have gathered at the Lord's table

be forever filled with the joy of his resurrection

and come at last to the banquet of heaven.

Grant this through Christ our Lord.  **Amen.**