



Wednesday, 1st April

Holy Week in Words and Music

**St Mary's Church
Compton Pauncefoot**

7pm



Wednesday, 1st April 2026



**Holy Week in Words and Music,
St Mary's Church, Compton Pauncefoot**

- 1. R.S. Thomas – The Coming**
God sees the world
- 2. Charles Causley – The Ballad of the Breadman**
Christ enters the world
- 3. Ann Weems – Holy Week**
The week begins
- 4. Mary Oliver – Gethsemane**
The garden struggle
- 5. Denise Levertov – Salvator Mundi: Via Crucis**
The way of the cross
- 6. Aimee Joseph – The Fountain's Cry**
The meaning of the cross





The Coming, by R.S.Thomas

God sees the world

And God held in his hand a small globe.
Look he said.
The son looked.
Far off, as through water,
he saw a scorched land of fierce colour.

The light burned there; crusted buildings cast their
shadows: a bright serpent,
a river uncoiled itself, radiant with slime.

On a bare hill a bare tree saddened the sky.
Many people held out their thin arms to it,
as though waiting for a vanished April to
return to its crossed boughs. The son watched them.
Let me go there, he said.



The Ballard of the Breadman by Charles Causley



Mary stood in the kitchen, baking a loaf of bread.
An angel flew in through the window. 'We've a job for you,' he said.

'God in his big gold heaven sitting in his big blue chair,
wanted a mother for his little son. Suddenly saw you there.'

Mary shook and trembled, 'It isn't true what you say.'
'Don't say that,' said the angel. 'The baby's on its way.'

Joseph was in the workshop planing a piece of wood.
'The old man's past it,' the neighbours said. 'That girl's been up to no good.'

'And who was that elegant fellow,' they said, 'in the shiny gear?'
The things they said about Gabriel were hardly fit to hear.

Mary never answered, Mary never replied.
She kept the information, like the baby, safe inside.

It was the election winter. They went to vote in town.
When Mary found her time had come the hotels let her down.

The baby was born in an annexe next to the local pub.
At midnight, a delegation turned up from the Farmers' Club.

They talked about an explosion that made a hole in the sky, said
they'd been sent to the Lamb and Flag to see God come down from on high.

A few days later a bishop and a five-star general were seen
with the head of an African country in a bullet-proof limousine.

'We've come,' they said, 'with tokens for the little boy to choose.'
Told the tale about war and peace in the television news.

After them came the soldiers with rifle and bombs and gun,
looking for enemies of the state. The family had packed up and gone.

When they got back to the village the neighbours said, to a man,
'That boy will never be one of us, though he does what he blessed well can.'

He went round to all the people, a paper crown on his head.
'Here is some bread from my father. Take, eat,' he said.

Nobody seemed very hungry. Nobody seemed to care.
Nobody saw the God in himself quietly standing there.

He finished up in the papers; he came to a very bad end.
He was charged with bringing the living to life. No man was that prisoner's friend.

There's only one kind of punishment to fit that kind of crime.
They rigged a trial and shot him dead. They were only just in time.

They lifted the young man by the leg, they lifted him by the arm,
they locked him in a cathedral in case he came to harm.

They stored him safe as water under seven rocks.
One Sunday morning he burst out like a jack-in-the-box.

Through the town he went walking. He showed them the holes in his head.
'Now do you want any loaves?' he cried. 'Not today' they said.



Holy Week by Ann Weems



Holy is the week ...
Holy, consecrated, belonging to God ...
We move from hosannas to horror
with the predictable ease
of those who know not what they do.

Our hosannas sung, our palms waved,
let us go with passion into this week.
It is a time to curse fig trees that do not yield fruit.
It is a time to cleanse our temples of any blasphemy.
It is a time to greet Jesus as the Lord's Anointed One,
to lavishly break our alabaster
and pour perfume out for him
without counting the cost.
It is a time for preparation ...
The time to give thanks and break bread is upon us.
The time to give thanks and drink of the cup is imminent.
Eat, drink, remember:
On this night of nights, each one must ask,
as we dip our bread in the wine, "is it I?"
And on that darkest of days, each of us must stand
beneath the tree
and watch the dying
if we are to be there
when the stone is rolled away.



The only road to Easter morning
is through the unrelenting shadows of that Friday.
Only then will the alleluias be sung;
only then will the dancing begin.



Gethsemane by Mary Oliver

The grass never sleeps.
Or the roses.
Nor does the lily have a secret eye that shuts until morning.

Jesus said, 'wait with me'. But the disciples slept.

The cricket has such splendid fringe on its feet,
and it sings, have you noticed, with its whole body,
and heaven knows if it ever sleeps.

Jesus said, 'wait with me'. And maybe the stars did, maybe
the wind wound itself into a silver tree, and didn't move,
maybe the lake far away, where once he walked as on
a blue pavement,
lay still and waited, wild awake.

Oh the dear bodies, slumped and eye-shut, that could not
keep that vigil, how they must have wept,
so utterly human, knowing this too
must be a part of the story.



Salvator Mundi: Via Crucis by Denise Levertov



Maybe he looked indeed
much as Rembrandt envisioned him
in those small heads that seem in fact
portraits of more than a model.

A dark, still young, very intelligent face,
a soul-mirror gaze of deep understanding, unjudging.
That face, in extremis, would have clenched its teeth
in a grimace not shown in even the great crucifixions.
The burden of humanness (I begin to see) exacted from him
that he taste also the humiliation of dread,
cold sweat of wanting to let the whole thing go,
like any mortal hero out of his depth,
like anyone who has taken herself back.
The painters, even the greatest, don't show how,
in the midnight garden,
or staggering uphill under the weight of the cross,
he went through with even the human longing
to simply cease, to not be.

Not torture of body,
not the hideous betrayals humans commit
nor the faithless weakness of friends, and surely
not the anticipation of death (not then, in agony's grip)
was incarnation's heaviest weight,
but this sickened desire to renege,
to step back from what he, who was God,
had promised himself, and had entered
time and flesh to enact.

Sublime acceptance, to be absolute, had to have welled
up from those depths where purpose
drifted for mortal moments.





The Fountain's Cry, by Aimee Joseph

Lips that spoke the oceans vast,
now cracked and calling for a drip.
The Fountain of all living water,
desperate for a single sip.

He who calmed the stormy sea,
now parched beneath a darkened sky,
offers up his final breath,
and gives the "I thirst" cry.

Not merely water did he crave,
but love from hearts he came to save.
For bitter vinegar was given,
to open up the gates of heaven.

The Source of life felt death's dry hand,
to quench our thirst in desert land.
By the broken, thirsty King,
we drink the joy the waters bring.

