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## ... for Youth and Young Adults

### Flowering the Easter Cross

**A** longstanding Easter tradition in churches is the “flowering of the cross.” Parishioners bring and place colorful fresh flowers on a drab wooden cross on Easter morning. The flowering of the cross represents the transition from Good Friday to Easter, from meditation and mourning of Jesus’ death to joyful celebration of his resurrection. This practice transforms a barren cross, a reminder of Jesus’ death and sacrifice, into an Easter symbol. Covered with fresh, living flowers, the cross serves not only as an emblem of Jesus’ resurrection, but also of the continuing presence of Christ among us today.

While this may seem to some like an exercise in artistic decoration, and indeed results in something quite beautiful, I’ve come to appreciate some beautiful traditions and meanings associated with the flowering of the cross.

The sixth century hymn (#166) often sung on Good Friday celebrates this beauty with these words: “Faithful cross! Above all other, one and only noble tree! None in foliage, none in blossom, none in fruit thy peer may be.”

The tree of life in the Garden of Eden has often been seen as a foreshadowing of the cross. Some legends even say that the wood of Christ’s cross came from the tree of life or from a tree that grew from its seeds.

There is another legend that says at Christ’s death the cross burst into blooming flowers. Art work from the

sixth century shows a flowering cross.

This year, instead of the wooden cross children have covered with mite boxes and flowers in years past, everyone will have the opportunity to participate in the flowering of the cross on Easter morning. Children still may bring their mite boxes, which will be placed in a basket in front of the flowered cross. At SYF youth group during Lent, our 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students will actually build our new “flowering cross” from raw wood and wire mesh as they learn about this and other Easter customs.

As you prepare for Easter worship on April 21, St. James’s invites you to bring with you to church fresh flowers and greenery, perhaps from your own garden. Our new wooden cross will be displayed on the portico where parishioners of all ages can place their flowers on their way into worship. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to participate in flowering the cross. We’ll have some extra flowers available in case needed.

Over the course of the morning, the cross will eventually be covered in beau-



tiful flowers in a brilliant array of color, light, and lovely fragrance. A symbol of death, darkness, and pain will be transformed into something beautiful, new, and alive in celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Together, we can transform the cross and help make this Easter a celebration of new life. What a beautiful sight that will be!

Love ya! Mean it!

*Mary Beth*