

Culham / REEP Easter Calendar 2003

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GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

JESUS

After supper Jesus went out to the Mount of Olives, outside the walls of Jerusalem. There *'he began to be deeply distressed and troubled'* (Mark 14:33) and prayed that God would save him from the pain and death that he knew he shortly have to face. But Jesus knew that in the end it was more important that God's work was done – as he said to God, *'Not what I will, but what You will'* (Mark 14:36).

SLEEPING DISCIPLES

Jesus chose three disciples to go with him while he prayed – Peter, James and John. He asked them to stay awake close to him while he prayed, but they kept falling asleep. He said: *'Could you not keep watch for one hour? ... the spirit is willing, but the body is weak'* (Mark 14:38). The disciples were ashamed.

OLIVE TREES

Jesus prayed in a place called the Garden of Gethsemane. It would have contained olive trees.

ANGELS

Luke says that while Jesus was praying *'an angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him'* (Luke 22:43)

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EXTRA INFORMATION

JESUS

In his Gospel, Luke emphasises Jesus' anguish (the Greek word he actually uses is *agonia*, from which we get our word 'agony') by reporting that *'his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground'* (Luke 22:44)

SLEEPING DISCIPLES

Why did Jesus ask the disciples to stay awake with him? For support and companionship? To watch out for enemies? Was it because this was a time of "temptation" when the Devil tried to contradict the will of God – the disciples, too, had to struggle against this enemy? Perhaps it was all three! Unfortunately, on all counts, Jesus' closest friends let him down. He was alone.

OLIVE TREES

'Gethsemane' probably means *'oil-press'*, the place where olives were collected and pressed to extract their oil - an appropriate setting for Jesus' tormented struggle to stay true to his Father's will. Today pilgrims visit a cave on the hillside overlooking Jerusalem, which is said to be the original site of Jesus's prayers in the garden.

ANGELS

Sometimes painters show a hand appearing from a cloud above a scene like this one in Gethsemane. The hand represents the presence of God.

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Angels are meant to be God's go-betweens – carrying messages from Earth to Heaven, and from Heaven to Earth! Most people know that angels appeared in the empty tomb after Jesus' death, but angels were also in Gethsemane. They carried Jesus' prayers to Heaven, but Luke's Gospel also emphasizes that they bring assurance and strength down to Jesus from his Father in Heaven.

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