

Palm Sunday (C)

10th April 2022

'Make this 'Holy Week' holy!'

Lk 19:28–40 *'If these keep silence, the very stones will cry out'*

Is 50: *I offered my back to those who struck me ...* Ps 21: *Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani? ...* Phil 2: *though He was in the form of God ...*

Lk 22:14–23:56 The Passion according to Luke

The other evening I was down at St Patrick's, Soho, at a sung service of Stations of the Cross. The boys' choir of the Oratory School (about 40 of them!) sung a piece of beautiful polyphony between every other station; and we also had the chance to hear about the Catholic charity, 'Aid to the Church in Need,' helping support the beleaguered Christians of Iraq and relieve the sufferings also going on in the Ukraine. What struck me was that Fr Alexander, PP there in Soho, who led the Stations meditations, chose not to offer any words of his own, at all, at the 12th Station, 'Jesus Dies on the Cross.' Just silence.

I know how he feels. I always feel the same at this point on Palm Sunday (& on Good Friday too). Is there anything I can add to the eloquent words of the Passion Gospel? It has expressed it all: the Word of God made flesh has said all that needs to be said. He has died on the Cross; He has died for love of me; He has died to take

away my sins. His sacrifice expresses to the greatest extent ever possible the infinite love of God for humanity ... for fallen, sinful, unfaithful, but so-precious-to-God humanity. *Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit.* Silence.

Today's joyful Palm Procession, and this powerful Passion Gospel according to Luke, stand at the head of Holy Week, to stir us up to a fervent few days ahead — days that as faithful Catholics we really *must* give over to the Lord. This 'Great Week' is the heart of the Church's year, and the highlight of our annual commemorations of Jesus' life and ministry. We must really *want* to give this week to Him in a truly special way, by the maximum of our involvement, participation and prayer. Yes, I know it's university vacation time, but that's not how we should primarily view this week ahead: not a 'holiday week' as much as a 'holyday week'! We should observe it, in other words, as *Christians*, i.e. as an irreplaceable week in which to keep faith with Our Blessed Lord. So ...

We have Confessions available again this week (both Mon & Wed, 6–7pm) — the chance to receive

forgiveness of your sins, such an important element of our Lenten practice. And then the Sacred *Triduum* which is the centrepiece of the Christian year: days that we should keep, in their entirety, as people devoutly in love with Jesus our Saviour: Holy Thursday (7pm Mass of the Lord's Supper, and watching until midnight); Good Friday (3pm Liturgy, and 8pm Stations); and Holy Saturday night (8pm Vigil) taking us into Easter. If you have never attended the whole of the Sacred *Triduum* before, then I strongly suggest that you do so: they are 3 parts of a triptych, the sweep of sacrament, sacrifice and victory, a divine drama in 3 acts. Let's make sure that we set aside these days and times without excuse, without compromise, a total commitment of our hearts: these are days for the Lord, and the Masses and the 3 o'clock Good-Friday service are times when we should be present at the liturgy, to love & serve the Lord Jesus.

Think of all that He has done for you, all that He has sacrificed for mankind's good, and I think that that reflection will impel you to return love to Him by your

presence at the ceremonies. Holy Week can only be a 'holy week' by your devout attendance in His Church ... here, or wherever you have travelled to. So: here and now this Palm Sunday, make the Lord that heartfelt promise that you will be there for *Him* this week as He offers His life for *you*!

Christ Jesus ... emptied Himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are, and ... He was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. ... All beings ... should bend the knee at the name of Jesus, and ... every tongue should acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.