

Palm Sunday (B)

25th March 2024

‘The *Most Holy Week!*’

Mk 11: 1–10: *Hosanna to the Son of David!*

Is 50: 4–7: For my part I

made no resistance

Phil 2: 6–11: *to assume the condition of a slave*

Mk 14–15: Passion according to Mark

With these beautiful and heart-rending Palm-Sunday readings, we have begun our blessed and solemn keeping of Holy Week! It’s the centrepiece of our whole Christian year, and we should be determined to give to the Lord the maximum possible; of any time in the year, the coming days are the most precious, and I urge you to make this week here at Newman House a real priority. How we keep Holy Week is a good measure of how seriously we take our faith. Do we want to be with Jesus, ... or not?

During the course of the Palm-Sunday liturgy we experience *Holy Week in miniature*: we go from the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, the noisy adulation of the palm-waving crowds of disciples hailing the Messiah’s arrival ... to the silent depths of seeming failure as the Lord’s body is laid in the tomb by a mourning few, hurriedly, before nightfall and the beginning of the Passover/Sabbath. This Palm/Passion Sunday, then,

introduces us to the themes of Holy Week ahead, and reminds us strongly that this Week *is not like any other week*, and that we should be ready to give this week over to the Lord with great generosity. Please, treat this week as a chance to show your Christian faith in action: make sure that you come to the *maximum possible* here in the Chapel this week. Let’s not treat Holy Week as a holiday, even if (for some of you) it’s the university vacation, and we have some public holidays! Holy Week itself should be for things holy, and for honouring the Lord’s suffering and saving sacrifice.

I want to highlight the profile of the week ahead, and urge you to be drawn in your hearts, of your deep love for Jesus, to be here with Him throughout the week. The ‘*Triduum*,’ as we call it are the ‘three days’ which are at the centre of the Church’s year: *Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday* ... leading in to the night of Easter. If you have never before followed the full sequence of the *Triduum*, then I urge you to, this year, so as to experience fully the passage of Christ from death to life. You will not

regret it. **Holy Thursday** (7pm) is the commemoration of the Last Supper — the first Mass — followed by the procession to the ‘garden’ where we pray with Him as He awaits His arrest. **Good Friday** is the solemn commemoration of the Crucifixion of Jesus, and every single one of us should be here (3pm), to honour Jesus who died for us, to kiss the wood of His holy Cross. There is nowhere else a believing Christian could intend to be, on Good Friday afternoon, other than in church. For the infinite love of Jesus for us led Him to sacrifice His life; we must sacrifice Good Friday for Him. *In particular*, we also keep Good Friday with prayer, fasting and abstinence from meat — a day of penance. Then, after waiting in the silence of Saturday, we come to the great **Vigil of Easter** (8pm) on Saturday night, and welcome Jesus in His resurrection. If you have never been to the Easter Vigil, I suggest that this year you take the chance — it’s the *central liturgy of the whole Christian year*, celebrating our victorious risen Lord! And it’s the culmination of a year-or-more’s preparation for our 4 brothers and sisters who

are getting Baptized & Confirmed. So, let’s promise to keep Holy Week really well, here with Jesus, so we can rejoice properly come Easter Day! Let’s show how much we deeply love Him.

A final few words about the stirring 2nd Reading today: it sums up the attitude of Our Blessed Lord as that of *humility*: He “*did not cling to His equality with God, but emptied Himself to assume the condition of a slave.*” Even in His Messianic entry to Jerusalem He is humble: no trappings of power: no regalia or armed entourage, just the simple mount of a donkey. But this humility is *just a small thing* compared to the humiliation he ultimately endures on the Cross a few days later. When we truly reflect on all that the Son of God gave up for us, right to the shedding of His blood, we see that we *must* turn our lives to Him and offer Him our all. We can make a beautiful expression of this through keeping Holy Week. Let’s humbly say ‘Yes’ to the chance to be with our Lord every step of the way this week: to the Upper Room, to Calvary, and to the Tomb. Let’s give our lives to Him, and make it a *truly Holy Week*.