

Palm Sunday (C)

13<sup>th</sup> April 2025

‘All kneel for a period of silence’

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

What is there to say after the Passion Gospel has been read? How can any words of a priest — even those of the most eloquent of preachers — compare with the Word of God we’ve just heard, especially the words of the one true High Priest, Jesus Christ: His words of comfort, compassion & healing, even as He makes in suffering His *Via Crucis*, His way to the Cross? Perhaps the most suitable response is the very one we make when we fell to our knees at the death of Jesus: a solemn and sacred *silence*. It’s a poignant interval of quiet reflection — on Palm Sunday today and again on Good Friday — when we just *stop, ...kneel, ... say nothing, ...* allow the significance of the moment to touch our souls: the Son of God has gone to His death for *me, ... for us, ... for humanity, ... for sinful mankind*. The utterly sinless One has allowed the horror of sin to wreak such bloody havoc on His sacred flesh that, drained of lifeblood He expires on perhaps the

most-horrific instrument of torture ever invented. “*I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting,*” as Isaiah prophesied of the Messiah, the Suffering Servant. “All kneel for a period of silence,” says the lectionary and rightly so: the heart of this Passion / Palm Sunday is that reverent, respectful moment of silence; *ditto* on Good Friday. The Church sometimes wants us just to be *quiet*, and listen for the voice of the Lord.

Some of the most important moments in our spiritual lives are the quiet moments, when we stop, ... kneel, ... say nothing, ... allow the significance of God’s quiet presence to us in Jesus to speak to us. Do we allow this to happen often enough in our daily life, this silence? Or are we prone to drowning it out with noise? — earbuds / airpods in our ears day and night, even when walking along the road, even when studying in the library? Tunes and lyrics (sometimes of questionable morality!) fed into our ears, minds, hearts, all day long! Is that healthy? And are we getting enough of a daily dose of *restorative silence*

in our lives, to stabilize our spiritual life? I think that it says everything, that in the very mid-point of the liturgical year we have this sudden, mid-Gospel pause to kneel and be quiet. So, when it happens again this Friday, when you fall to your knees at Jesus's death — whether you are here or at your local parish at home — *make use of those silent moments*; savour them, cherish them, and offer the deepest, most-loving, heartfelt prayer of thanks to Jesus: *Lord, You have died for me, ... a sinner, ... a loved sinner.*

How are we going to perpetuate that attitude of deep gratitude this Holy Week? How as absolutely committed Christians are we going to make this week to be different from any other week this year, a truly *Holy Week*? Surely, best of all, by setting aside some time each day for *stopping* what we'd otherwise be doing, for real silence and prayer, and a recognition that *it is Holy Week*, and that it must be different — it must *feel* different, and it must *be* different. If you're staying in London this week, nearby, then make maximum use of Newman House: it's open all the usual hours Mon–Wed; **a half-day mini-retreat** here

in the Chapel (Wed 3pm until Mass time); **Holy Thursday Mass** recalling the Last Supper (7pm); **Good Friday Liturgy of the Passion** to commemorate the Cross and Death of Our Lord (3pm); then the great **Easter Vigil** (Sat 8pm), high-point of the whole year's Liturgy, welcoming the new light of the Resurrection, including receiving in that light, into the fullness of our Catholic community 3 students who've been preparing all year so far for this Easter. These holy joys are set before us; let's commit ourselves to each and every part of this Holy Week. Let's not get to next Sunday and find that Holy Week has been mediocre, or passed us by without a really generous giving of self to Jesus. Silence and prayer is what we most need this Holy Week — let's give that to ourselves, so as to give ourselves to Jesus: stop, kneel, be quiet, allow Him to reveal the significance of your life to you, the significance of your life to Him. You're worth dying for! Before that awesome mystery, what is there to say?

*At the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:10–11)*