

Palm Sunday (A)

29th March 2026

‘Making Holy Week holy’

Mt 21:1–11: *Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!*

Is 50: *I hid not my face from disgrace, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.*

Ps 21: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*

Phil 2: *He humbled Himself, therefore God has highly exalted Him.*

Mt 26–27 Passion according to Matthew.

Holy Week is upon us! — the ‘Great Week’ as it is sometimes called — the heart of our Christian calendar, expressing all that we love and hold most dear; so, whether you’ll be in London/Newman House this week, or elsewhere at home or travelling, set yourself the clear intention of being at each and every one of the *Triduum* services: Holy Thursday evening, Good Friday afternoon, Holy Saturday night (Easter). These are precious and important days, and even if you’ve not in the past had the tradition, or the encouragement, to attend each and every one of those sacred days, please decide, as young adults, to do so now. Other things can wait: studies, shopping, socializing — these can give way for a few hrs this week to the devoted following of our Saviour Jesus into His Passion, Death & Resurrection through the prayer of the *Triduum* liturgy. Nothing else is more important this week,

other than, perhaps, your getting to Confession if you’ve not yet managed that this Lent. I was lucky enough, when I was about 8, of going with my Dad to the *Triduum* for the first time in my parish in Kent. [For years afterwards the joke was that I had been tired ever since the Holy Week of 1974!] But what an experience, to enter into that grown-up world of sharing in these most holy and exalted days, the high-point of the Christian liturgical year.

We were brought to the brink of Holy Week last Sunday with the account (Jn 11) of that astonishing miracle of Lazarus’s being raised from the dead: the Messianic action of Jesus really staked His claim to divine power over life & death, and — performed so close to Jerusalem in the village of Bethany, with so many Jews having witnessed it — provoked a vicious reaction from the Temple authorities and the Sanhedrin; they were more determined than ever to do away with Him, to cancel His disruptive ministry, and to try and restore some order and the *status quo*. Yet, with what does Our Lord follow up the beautiful compassion of His raising His friend Lazarus

— which translates into provocation for the Jewish leaders? None other than the *Messianic entry*: in itself Jesus's simply taking a humble donkey ride, but seen through the prophetic prism of Zechariah, truly an act of acclaiming Him Messiah and Davidic King. This is not lost on His adherents and disciples, who cannot contain themselves, but are ready to shout out, sing *Hosannas*, strew palm branches and give him the red-carpet treatment with their very own cloaks.

This is how we began Holy Week, today, on Gower Street, acclaiming Jesus our Christ and glorious leader. And this is the zeal with which we should continue through all this Holy Week, its highs and the lows: the *peak* of the Last Supper with its great new Sacraments of Priesthood & Eucharist; the *low* of the Betrayal & Trial and brutal mistreatment; the *peak* of the lifting-up on high of Jesus on the throne of the Cross, His glorious Sacrifice; the *low* of laying His lifeless body in the nearby borrowed tomb; ... and then the wait, the dreadful silence of Good Friday night and Holy Saturday, until the high of Easter, a *peak*

more glorious than anything imaginable or ever before seen in human history: the Resurrection.

This lies before us; this is Holy Week, if kept well — a huge spur to our souls, to our hearts, to our faith. Please choose now how (and where) you will enter and celebrate Holy Week *to the max.*, to the glory of God and for your own eternal salvation. The holy words of Scripture, the hymns and music, the plethora of vivid actions and sacred symbols — palms, Chrism oil, foot-washing, bread and wine, light and candles, incense, and a huge font of water — these all add to our sense of drama, a *theo-drama* in which God is the key player, but who brings us all into play as sharers in the divine gifts, indeed sharers in the divine nature by adoption. It is a Week of great prayer, of great service to God and to one another, as we witness and build up our deep faith in the one whom St Paul hymns thus:

He emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a Cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him ... (Phil 2)