

Homily

5th April 2020 – Palm Sunday

Today on Palm Sunday we begin Holy Week, the great week of our church year that celebrates all that is central to our faith. But this year things are going to be different for us because we are unable to gather together to celebrate the special liturgies as a parish family, which for me are always the highlight of our year. Sometimes it's only when we don't have something or someone that we fully realise just how important they are and how much they mean to us. It's with sadness that I am sitting here writing these words. However, I do think that we are offered a real opportunity this week to grow in our personal faith as we walk with the Lord and reflect on the different steps and stages of the last week of His earthy life and how they touch us at the deepest possible level.

The invitation that we receive today is no different to any other year, we are invited on this Palm Sunday to walk with Jesus on those last steps of His earthly journey. We will focus particularly on the sacred three days that we call the *Triduum*; Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. Holy Week always ends with the glory of Easter, when we celebrate the Resurrection, Jesus' great victory over sin and death which gives hope and meaning to our lives.

On Palm Sunday we have the introduction or the prelude, if you like, to the great week and we begin the week with the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. The crowds are gathered, they lay their garments on the road and waive palm branches and sing 'Hosanna' as they welcome their Messiah and King. But how quickly the mood changes because only a few days later those shouts of Hosanna quickly turn into cries of 'Let Him be crucified.'

How fickle the people were as their attitudes completely change. I suppose at this point I wonder when I have been fickle in my life to Jesus, to others and to other situations? When have I gone along with things because it is the easy option to take? When have I followed the crowd and not stood up for what I believe?

Lord I am truly sorry for those times that I have let you down, please forgive me.

This year we have Matthew's account of the passion of Our Lord and I think today it would be good to spend some time reading and reflecting on this Gospel passage from Matthew. What are the words or phrases that stand out for me and touch me today?

Homily

5th April 2020 – Palm Sunday

When we speak of the passion of Jesus we usually mean the suffering and death that is inflicted on Him. But the passion is not just something that is done **to** Jesus by others. Fr Denis McBride suggests that it is the power within Jesus, **His** passion, that enables him to face the violence, the suffering and the pain.

Jesus had choices, He chose to come and enter Jerusalem triumphantly when He could have stayed in Galilee and avoid what was ahead. In the garden of Gethsemane, we hear how Jesus is in great distress and has another choice to make, this is what he says; **'My Father, if this cup cannot pass me by without my drinking it, your will be done!'**

Jesus is obedient to the will of His Father and accepts the cup of suffering that will lead to His death on the Cross. Jesus is a passionate man and the passion that is in Him gives Him the courage and the strength that He needs to endure the isolation, the pain (mental and physical) and the suffering of His final days which climaxed with His death on the Cross. The greatest act of love that there ever has been, perfect love.

The Cross is our great symbol of love, God's love. God loves us more than we could ever imagine and Jesus is the one who reveals that love to us through His passion, suffering and death on the Cross that will be the focus of our thoughts and prayers on Good Friday.

So, on this Palm Sunday let's accept the invitation that's issued to us today to journey with the Lord through this Holy Week, let's spend time together praying and reflecting on the last days of Our Lord's earthly life. In these most unusual circumstances that we find ourselves in we pray that we will come even closer to Jesus Our Lord of love and life, the new life that we will celebrate together next week on Easter Sunday.

I hope you and your families are well and I hope you have a good and holy week. Please be assured of my prayers for you all every day, particularly at Mass.

Take care and sending much love,

God bless,

Fr Phil

Bidding Prayers and Spiritual Communion

5th April 2020 – Palm Sunday

As we begin this Holy Week we bring all our prayers before the Lord who loves us with a perfect love:

For the Church; may we grow during these Holy Week days in love for God and one another, knowing the love which casts out fear.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For the world in which we live, challenged by the global pandemic; may our leaders make wise decisions for the common good and in caring for the most vulnerable. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For those who are sick at this time; may they, and their families, know grace and healing in their time of need.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For those who are self-isolating: trusting in the Lord Jesus and receiving the support of the community around them, may they know that they are never alone. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For all our health care professionals and emergency services; may they be granted health and strength in their generous service.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For ourselves in this Holy Week; may we be granted a generosity of spirit, so as not to forget those most in need at this time.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith, especially **Sean Barnes, Alan Lockwood, George Cull, Mary Hickey** and all those who have died during this past last week: **“Eternal rest...”**

We join our prayers with those of Mary our Mother: **“Hail Mary...”**

We place our own private needs and intentions before the Lord in a moment of stillness and silence.

Loving Father, we offer these and all our prayers to you through your Son, who is Christ Our Lord, **Amen.**

Bidding Prayers and Spiritual Communion

5th April 2020 – Palm Sunday

Spiritual Communion

Prayer of St Alphonsus

My Jesus,

I believe that you are present in this Holy Sacrament of the altar.

I love you above all things and

I passionately desire to receive you into my soul.

Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,

come spiritually into my soul

so that I may unite myself wholly to you now and forever.

Amen.