

## Weekly Message from Fr William for Palm Sunday 2023

Dear People of St Mary's, it's Holy Week again – the holiest week in the Church's year. It begins with Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord ('Palm Sunday' for short). It commemorates his entry into Jerusalem. The crowds cut foliage from the trees and bushes round about and spread them on the road to strew his way. We do something similar with fronds cut from our own grounds, and this year I'll be inviting you to place yours on the sanctuary as you process in to better echo the actions of the crowds that day.

After his triumphal entry into Jerusalem the readings of the Mass switch decisively to his Passion. We listen to the words of prophecy from Isaiah foretelling the Passion of the anointed one: 'I offered my back to those who struck me, my cheeks to those who tore at my beard; I did not cover my face against insult and spittle.' In response we sing the words of the Psalmist – 'All who see me deride me. They curl their lips, they toss their heads. They tear holes in my hands and my feet.' We listen again, this time to the words of Philippians: 'He was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross.' Then after singing the Gospel acclamation we listen to the account of the Passion, this year from St Matthew's Gospel, which spans the whole sequence of events that will then be played out during the days of Holy Week. This will be followed by a moment of 'liturgical silence' in place of the usual homily. 'Liturgical silence', something I'll speak more about, is an inner silence shared by the whole assembly and constitutes a 'point of arrival within the liturgical sequence', and a shared awareness that we have reached this point. (*Pope Francis – DD 52*).

Maundy Thursday and Good Friday can only really be understood when taken together: The Last Supper when Christ gives himself totally to his people; The Passion of Good Friday when he gives himself totally to his Father. In this way Christ makes of himself a living bridge between us and the Father. 'Liturgical silence' again after John's account of the Passion, in place of a homily.

For the Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday we will again be using a cross which arrived from Jerusalem last year made from the wood of a Holy Land olive tree. For more information on this, and on the Veneration of the Cross, and the origins of this tradition, and how on Good Friday all wood becomes holy by association, as the instrument of our salvation, see weekly message 3 April 2022. As you come up for veneration you're invited to touch, kiss, or bow to the cross, whichever you feel most comfortable with.

Don't be surprised we're short on Mass Servers this year. Before Covid we had built up a steady rolling team of Servers. Two years of restrictions put an end to this rolling recruitment, so we're having to start again from scratch. The good news is we have started again with recruitment and training and a sense of team spirit.

Our projectors have been serviced and fitted with new lamps for the first time since installation in 2016. I hope you'll notice a clearer image. The livestream camera has been rectified. It had been giving a dim image due to a locked iris. Apologies those who have been on the livestream receiving end of this dim image. See bulletin for more on this.



Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2023