

## Sunday Message from Fr William for Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord 2024

Dear People of St Mary's, it's Holy Week and a good moment to take a break from this exploration I've been sharing with you into our heavenly homeland, the 'other world' that Jesus speaks of. Remember though, it is to take us with him into the 'other world' that Christ carries through the actions of Holy Week.

On Palm Sunday he enters Jerusalem, the holy city, and is acclaimed King. 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' Their prophetic cry announces the coming of his kingdom. But his kingdom is 'not of this world' (John 18); his is the kingdom of the 'other world', the kingdom of heaven. And he comes for this purpose – to take us with him into that heavenly kingdom.

The reading of the Passion on Palm Sunday recounts the sequence of actions Christ carries through, starting with the Institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. Then in the Garden of Gethsemane he makes the perfect alignment of his human will to the will of the Father: 'Abba, Father, take this cup away from me; but let it be as you, not I, would have it.' On the Cross the next day he makes the total gift of himself to the Father: 'Father, into your hand I commit my spirit.' With this sequence of actions he establishes the Paschal Mystery. Like an ever flowing river, this is the source of eternal life for the world.

We then go on through Holy Week to relive this sequence of actions. In the celebration of the Lord's Supper on Maundy Thursday, Christ takes the Jewish Passover meal and transforms it into the Christian Sacrament of the Eucharist. In this sacrament Christ, fully divine and fully human, makes a total gift of himself to us. This is the symbolism of washing their feet. It speaks of a total self-gift to his people. At the same time the sacrament of the Eucharist is a sacrifice – Christ's offering of his whole self, divinity and humanity, to the Father. And so the Holy Sacrifice of the Eucharist is a sacramental realisation of his self-offering to the Father in Gethsemane and on Calvary. By the grace of our baptism, that flows from the Paschal Mystery, we will then be joined to Christ, to become part of the sacrifice, an integral part of his self-offering to the Father as members of the Body of Christ.

On Good Friday he accomplishes this same Passion. The opening prayer says it all: 'Father, sanctify your servants, for whom Christ your Son, by the shedding of his blood, established the Paschal Mystery.' This is not a day of sorrow. We are not weeping with the women of Jerusalem on the *via crucis*. 'Women of Jerusalem, do not weep for me.' (Luke 23). This is a warrior engaging in battle against the forces of darkness. This is a 'might hero' (Jeremiah 20) carrying through his task to victory. Mel Gibson has it right in 'The Passion'. When Mary runs to him on the *via crucis* he replies: 'See, Mother, I make all creation new.' And remember his final words from the Cross, in John's account, 'It is accomplished.' And bowing his head he yielded up his spirit. (John 19). After the proclamation of the Passion, we'll have in place of a homily a period of silence as we simply stay for a moment with the immensity of what he has accomplished for us.

William

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