

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER

Today, Palm Sunday, Jesus enters the Holy City as the true Heir of the House and Throne of David. The true King of Israel, the King of the Jews by direct descent from King David, now enters His capital city to be greeted by the adulation of the adoring and enthusiastic crowds who recognise His claim to the throne crying out, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord!" Yet He enters Jerusalem on a donkey – not as a conquering king but eschewing His claim to an earthly kingdom, for His Kingdom is a universal kingdom – "I am a King. For this I was born and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. My kingship is not of this world" (St. John 18 v 36-38). Christ the King is the Universal King, King of Kings and Lord of Lords and yet " He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on the Cross" (Philippians 2 v 8). "The world was made through Him, yet the world knew Him not. He came to His own people, and His own people received Him not" (St. John 1 v 10).

From His Conception and Birth (when the Magi presented the prophetic gifts of gold for kingship, frankincense for priesthood and myrrh to anoint His Dead Body) Jesus has been making His Way to this Passover Sacrifice of the Lamb of God in the Holy City where, as the Priest-King of Jerusalem He will offer His Body and Blood on the Altar of the Cross for the salvation of the world He came to save. His Coronation is a Crown of Thorns, His Royal Sceptre a reed placed in His Hands, and for kingship a purple robe is draped over His Shoulder.

During Lent we have followed Jesus to Calvary by the Stations of the Cross and now we arrive at the foot of the Cross standing where Mary stands and stoops and falls, and the sword pierces her own heart as the spear pierces the Side of Jesus.

" Extended on the cursed tree, Besmeared with dust and sweat and blood, See there the King of Glory see! Sinks and expires the Son of God"

We too, as a Church, have been unexpectedly and suddenly plunged into this extended Good Friday of the Church – churches closed, the public celebration of Mass suspended, baptisms deferred, weddings postponed, funerals restricted to graveside or crematorium. It is difficult to think of a precedent in the long history of the Church. Might we not see in these unprecedented times a deeper providence at work? A purgation of the Church (after so many scandals), the mortification of the Church, a "four days in the tomb" of the Church – so that (responding to these days of plague with repentance and a renewed and vivified commitment to the spiritual life) the Lord may bring Resurrection to the Church and a New Pentecost?

As during this Holy Week we follow in the Way of the Cross, our eyes come to rest on the Tomb of Jesus. Holy Saturday. All is quiet. A sacred silence covers the earth. The Creator of Heaven and Earth sleeps within the Sepulchre. He has entered death to destroy death and death cannot contain Him! Death cannot hold Him down! – and on Easter morning death is blown apart from the inside through the resplendent power of the Resurrection, the stone is rolled away and He Who is the Resurrection strides forth from the tomb taking death captive and liberating our fallen humanity.

May God grant to the Church such a resurrection after this long Good Friday of the Church. Let us pray for it. May the Lord bring us through to Resurrection and a New Pentecost. " Lo Jesus greets us, risen from the tomb; Lovingly He greets us, scatters fear and gloom; Let the Church with gladness, hymns of triumph sing, For her Lord now liveth, death has lost its sting" Come, Lord Jesus! Amen! Amen!