

Christ Church Freemantle

Sunday 5th April; Passion Sunday

This is the beginning of Holy Week, when many of us, in normal times, like to gather daily to trace the events we read of in the accounts of our Saviour's Passion in the four Gospels, leading finally to his death on Good Friday, so that we can know more deeply the joy of the resurrection on Easter Day.



Palm Sunday begins traditionally with the blessing of palm crosses which we carry in procession as we re-enact Jesus Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. We can't be together this year to go in procession as we sing 'All glory, laud and honour', and we can't even have palm crosses to carry, but we can make our own. And if we've got a hymn book, or can remember the words anyway, we can still sing the hymn - no-one's going to hear us but we will all know we're joining in. You could even find your favourite Passiontide hymns to sing along to if you've got access to YouTube. If you've got a garden you can make a stick cross. Just find two sticks to tie together with string or wool or wire, or, if you haven't got a garden, you could make one out of card or cardboard.

Last Sunday when I sat down at 10.00 am and lit my candle I decided not just to pray for, but to write down, the names of everyone who would normally be sitting near me in church. But once I started I wasn't sure what I meant by near me so I just carried on writing down the names of everyone who is normally in church at 10.00 am on Sunday morning plus those who come only occasionally. And I ended up with a page full!!! And I had a real sense of us gathered together which has stayed with me through the week as I pray for us all every day by name.

So, as you settle down on this extraordinary Palm Sunday, you may like to light your candle and ask God to bless your cross to be a sign for you through the coming week of the complete self-giving love our Saviour had and always has had and always will have for you, and of your desire to follow him step by step to Calvary.

What strikes me as I read the Palm Gospel, Matthew 21:1-11, is Christ's hidden loneliness even as he is acclaimed by the crowd with loud hosannas and cheers, because he knows what's **really** going on here, and he's been praying to the Father about it all through his three years of public ministry. The crowd are excited because they think he's coming to save them, and they're right about that. But they've got the wrong idea about what that saving means and what it entails. And so they are easy fodder for the



religious leaders when they want to get rid of this dangerous man who threatens the status quo, later in the week. That loneliness or isolation, is something we can identify with wholeheartedly this year especially if we live alone as we self-isolate, or keep our distance from others if we go to the supermarket or for a walk. And so we can be assured that in our loneliness our Lord is with us and has experienced for himself that sense of desolation. It means we can enter more fully into his suffering since we are experiencing something of it in ourselves.

Again, traditionally we would hear the full account of Christ's Passion, this year it's Matthew 26:14 right through to the end of Matthew 27. You may like to read that slowly and thoughtfully, stopping and digesting the story wherever the Spirit guides you. And you may also like to take time to read similarly Mark, Luke and John's accounts during the first three days of this week.

Eileen Wetherell