

**Palm Sunday the beginning of Holy Week
5th April 2020**

Liturgy of the Palms:
Matthew 21.1-11; Psalm 118,1-2,19-29

Liturgy of the Passion:
Isaiah 50.4-9a; Psalm 31.9-16; Philippians 2.5-11; Matthew 26.14-27.66

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God,
who of thy tender love towards the world
hast sent thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ
to take upon him our flesh
and to suffer death upon the cross:
grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility,
and also be made partakers of his resurrection;
through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord,
who liveth and reigneth with thee,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen

A reflection from Rev'd Anne Burden

Today is Palm Sunday - one of my favourite Sundays in the Church's calendar. The worship usually starts with a gloriously chaotic procession around the Church - inside or out - with palm crosses and singing "hosanna" in our hymns. This always seems to go a bit wrong - the singing gets out of sync and the front of the procession gets tangled up with the back. When I was a Vicar I used to worry about getting it right - until I realised it didn't matter - that's how it was on that first Palm Sunday - gloriously chaotic.

Jesus was entering Jerusalem as his time for crucifixion was coming near. The crowds didn't know this - they just greeted him with enthusiasm. Somehow they recognised him as the long expected Messiah - and so they shouted "Hosanna" - which in Hebrew is a mixture of a cry of praise and something like "save us, we pray". Jesus is seen as the Jewish King, who was riding on a donkey, a sign of peace,

rather than on a war horse. The mood is of excitement, almost hero worship ... briefly. But the mood changes quickly - and it's not long before the same crowd is shouting "Crucify him". It's another thing I like about Palm Sunday - how it's the tipping point into Holy Week with the special services leading to Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and finally Easter Day - the Day of Resurrection.

None of this will be possible this year - and many people will be feeling a great sense of loss during this special and holy time. But Holy Week and Easter can't be postponed or cancelled like so many other events which are also important to us. The season is in God's hands not ours, and we have to find different ways of marking it which will fit in with this strange and difficult time dominated as it is by coronavirus. I'm sure that Andrew will be making suggestions about how to do this as we move into Holy Week - so I mustn't get ahead of myself!

Today is Palm Sunday - and for those of you who will miss collecting your Palm Cross why don't you make your own? If you 'Google' "How to make a Palm Cross" - you'll come up with dozens of instructions, diagrams and videos to show you how. It doesn't look too difficult - honest! If you don't happen to have a garden with a palm tree in it - or a plant with very, very long leaves - just use paper (coloured green for an authentic look) There's even a Youtube video for making paper palm crosses!! If you can't manage the instructions and happen to have an old palm cross around the house - lots of us do - try taking it apart and put it back together again. Now that's a challenge!!

When you've had your "Blue Peter moment" and made your cross - what might you do with it?Keep it.

- > Keep it with you as you journey through Holy Week - as you read the story and mark it in whatever way you can.
- > Keep it until this horrible virus is over - and may be we can gather our crosses together in church and shout a very loud Hosanna.

> Keep it until next Ash Wednesday - because as you probably know - palm crosses are used to make next year's ashes.

Our palm crosses are part of the circle of life we live with God. God who is always present bringing light from darkness, new life from death, new beginnings from endings. Whatever life deals out to us, God is there - giving us his presence, his love and the hope of good things to come.

Rev'd Anne Burden

How will you journey through Holy Week?

Thank you Anne for the above reflection. So how are we to journey through Holy Week in these difficult times? My sense as I have prayed about how we will celebrate Holy Week is that we are invited to experience it in a different way. At its core the journey of Holy Week is about struggle, self sacrifice, acts of love, of dying to one way of life to be born again into a new way of being. We cannot gather in the normal way but what we can do is embrace the journey in a new way, in the church of our homes.

We are each being called to something new in many areas of our lives. In terms of Holy Week we each have the question of how in our particular homes we will have a time of prayer and reflection that will put us in touch with God, his peace, love, hope and strength. To live the story of Holy Week afresh in these difficult and unprecedented times. We might want to use some of the resources on our web site, YouTube channel or the services broadcast on the radio or TV as part of this. We might think what has been helpful in the past and work out how we can do some of this where we are in a new and fresh way. The key is, as a wise person once said is 'to pray as you can, not as you can't'.

I have been struck over the last week by the variety of ways people are finding to nurture their faith and the faith of others. There are more churches and designated

places of worship in the world than there ever has been! Even if you live alone you are not alone, you worship alongside each other and also with the Saints and Angels who have gone before.

For my part, I am here to support and help you make this journey. I will be doing this in different ways. First and foremost saying my prayers and praying with you and for you. Secondly being available - at the end of phone or email or through zoom for a chat or prayer. Thirdly offering via various means thoughts and reflections to help us navigate through the days ahead.

I feel we are being asked to embrace something new - discovering in our homes God's presence and discovering in ourselves God's presence and resources. The key for each of us as we make this journey is to remember those in our parishes who might be struggling to find their way. As we discover what God is calling us to in prayer and worship at this time, we will also be called to share this with others - to pick up the phone, send an email, post an idea on Facebook.

Beginning Holy Week

These unprecedented times come with feelings and experiences of searing loss, bewilderment, betrayal and fear. These are all present in the story of Holy Week that we are now entering. Here too, through these times and experiences, is the presence of one who never leaves us, a love that goes beyond death, who brings us to new and eternal life. In all of this God is with us and through the journey of Holy Week we are brought into new understanding and new life. This particular time and this particular Holy Week, as any journey of life-changing proportions, is going to be hard, but God is with us providing the path through from death to life.

As you begin Holy Week it is traditional to read the passion, so you may want to do this over this weekend. Matthew Chapter 26 verse 14 all the way to chapter 27 verse 66.

Peace and good wishes,

Andrew