



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

Palm Sunday-Year B-March 28th 2021

***Readings: Mark 11: 1-10, Isaiah 50: 4-7, Psalm 21, Philippians 2: 6-11,
Mark 14: 1-15: 47***

Why, I used to wonder, do we have to have the full Passion reading on Palm Sunday as well as on Good Friday? Would it be too much to ask for just one day when we could simply bask in the triumph without appearing to know what comes next? Wouldn't this heighten the sense of shock at the subsequent turn of events? (And, I added underneath my breath, at least the Anglicans get away without a sermon on this day!)

Well, I guess that Mother Church prescribes, in her wisdom, the full dose because there is always a danger that, Palm Sunday, deprived of its ultimate context, may simply lead us to a kind of simplistic theology, the equation of the Passion with the dying/rising cults of the ancient near east. The fertility cults that saw the pattern of nature as the death of winter and the rebirth of Spring and the hoped-for fullness of Harvest.

In that pattern it would be all too easy to place the Christ event as just one more example of cyclical renewal.

THE GOSPEL does not permit us to do that. Jesus is not some sort of celestial Jack-in-the-box who, briefly hidden, pops up like a great party

surprise that is all too predictable. A sort of game of 'Peepo' to mock-scare the child within us.

The events of Holy Week are no less than a Cosmic and Existential drama played out in history with the highest imaginable stakes – the death of God, the triumph of the dark or the victory of the Creator of all and the Salvation of Man

We know, with the benefit of hindsight, the upshot of all this. But part of us must be back with the original disciples in their ignorance if we are to comprehend the enormity and cost of the divine project that saves us. So the liturgy submerges us in the whole five act tragedy. We are to encounter the ecstasy of human hope and its profoundest disappointment. We are to recognise, in these few days, our part in the desertions, the betrayals, the love of recognition when things are going well and our retreats from responsibility when the smoke of war descends. We are to review again the nature of our love and of our hope and of our faithfulness.

This we do against the backdrop of our fragile mortality. We are not part of some pattern of recycling vegetation but flesh and blood, soul and spirit. Beyond the Gates of Eden exiled, we are without hope. Our life ends, our bodies rot. If we do not grasp the depths of this annihilation, we cannot begin to comprehend the amazing miracle in Christ of the Resurrection life.

And so we immerse ourselves in the liturgy, the re-presenting of these great and pivotal events of history, both human and divine. We, whose way back is barred by the flaming swords of the Cherubim, whose very origin in sin is invested with eternal death, take stock of our disastrous destiny. We enter the Holy City with Him in triumph. True. But then we have to walk the Via Dolorosa, embrace the Cross of Calvary and wait on His all-powerful mercy as He harrows Hell, breaks down the doors of the

dungeons of the dead and lifts high the lost. Everything we do in Lent and in this Holiest of weeks is purposed to bring us, heart and soul, into that great journey of redemption and give us both amazed and thankful hearts that cannot but share the Glorious News with all who seek salvation.