

THE UPPER ALDE BENEFICE

Palm Sunday in the Passion of the Lord 2020

It's not just the big things that we miss at the moment, such as seeing our children and grandchildren, but also the little things as well. I think that this Sunday will be the first time for more years than I can remember that I shall not be blessing and distributing palm crosses and then bringing one home to put in a prominent place. As Christians we are missing all those things which, under normal circumstances, are part and parcel of our faith and witness - fellowship, bread and wine, sacred space. Perhaps there is an opportunity for us now that we are not subject to the usual constraints of time. We can only do so much gardening. There are only so many cupboards and drawers that can be cleaned out. There is an opportunity to spend some time in reflection, of being still each day in the presence of God.

Prayer for the day

Almighty and everlasting God, who in your tender love towards the human race sent your 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 your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Gospel

When they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately on entering it, you will find a colt tethered on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone should say to you, 'Why are you doing this?' reply, 'The Master has need of it and will send it back here at once.'" So they went off and found a colt tethered at a gate outside on the street, and they untied it. Some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They answered them just as Jesus had told them to, and they permitted them to do it. So they brought the colt to Jesus and put their cloaks over it. And he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. Those preceding him as well as those following kept crying out:

"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is to come. Hosanna in the highest!" (St Mark 11:1-10)

There is a certain incongruity about the events of Holy Week which begin today on Palm Sunday. It all begins with a sense of celebration. Our palm crosses would remind us of the cries of Hosanna shouted by the people of Jerusalem as Jesus enters the city. However, the unfolding events confront us with our complicity in the injustice which is to follow. We welcome the Christ of victory, the Christ of Palm Sunday, but we turn our backs on the Christ of suffering, the Christ of Good Friday. Palm crosses are symbols of that incongruity that often exists between the faith we profess on our lips and the faith we profess in our lives.

Suggestions for prayer

For our Bishops that they will inspire hope and courage in the people in their care. For world leaders and their governments as they make decisions which will affect the lives of millions of others, that they will find solutions which will protect the health and wellbeing of the people of the global community. For health and emergency care workers, for those involved in any way in supporting and caring for anyone who is sick, isolated, afraid or vulnerable in some way, that God will reward their generosity and self-sacrifice, keeping them and their loved ones safe at this present time. For everyone who is supplying food and essential goods to society at large, that they will continue to support people whom they might never meet, that they and those who depend on them will stay healthy. May Jesus, who gave hope to Martha and Mary when he raised Lazarus from the tomb, fill them with hope and courage. For everyone who is self-isolating or on quarantine and for those who are in prison at this time, that they will not feel alone and forgotten. May they find reasons for laughter.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch. My mobile is 07789 417050 and I have 'Facetime' if you want to talk directly.