

## **A Homily for Palm Sunday from Fr Allan**

### **HOLY WEEK IN THE TIME OF A PANDEMIC**

As we enter the most important and most holy week of the Church's year, we do so with a certain amount of trepidation. None of us will have had an experience of a Holy Week quite like Holy Week 2020. There is a sense of the unknown about it. We don't know how long the virus will continue to infect people and we don't know how we, personally, will be affected. Fear is a very unsettling emotion and it can take away our capacity to look at life in a reasoned way. Also, we can wonder how we should look upon the events that we will remember and make present this Holy Week, in the light of the many forms of suffering that are unfolding every day.

The fact that we are unable to come together to pray and participate in the stages of Holy Week - Palm Sunday, the final days of Lent, the Chrism Mass, the "Three Days", the "Triduum" (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday), may make it harder to keep a perspective on our faith and realise that God IS with us - as God is always at the very heart of suffering.

Here I must say that every day while I have been celebrating mass alone in the presbytery I have become more and more aware that we are a universal Church. I think this is because when a priest celebrates a "private" mass he does so on behalf of the whole Catholic/Universal Church. The masses have been celebrated for the various intentions and will continue to be. I have prayed for all of you and your families. In the intercessions, along with Pope Francis, I have prayed for those who have died, those who are grieving, those who live alone. I have prayed for the elderly, the young, the sick, those who are waiting for operations and treatment, those who have financial and occupational worries and the homeless who have no place to self-isolate. The list is always endless. I think these times make me more aware of prayer and how essential it is.

Just as "these times" are a great mixture of suffering and immense charity and goodwill, so Holy Week is a coming together of so many things. We celebrate the joy of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. On the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday we listen to the Songs of the Suffering Servant from the prophet Isaiah. On Maundy Thursday we will remember and attempt to practice the call to be servants to one another. We will mark Jesus' betrayal by his friend Judas and his capture by the occupying soldiers. On Good Friday we will read St John's account of the Passion and Death of Jesus. St John's account is different from the other accounts because Jesus is very much in control of the proceedings. He is in charge. This reading of the Passion then becomes the natural precursor to the Veneration of the Cross. The cross is turned from a symbol of failure into one of victory.

Following and engaging ourselves with all of these events will necessarily mean that we approach them with prayer and faith. We do this especially this year because faith and trust can help us to replace our anxiety with hope. If we can do this then we will be more able to share our mission. Our mission is to tell others that we are called to love as we have been loved by God.

When we ask for help in our relationship with God, to grow in compassion for those around us, we can come to a new level of purpose. We can feel the grace of being sent - to be with

and for others in a time of crisis. We can comfort others - calm their fears. We can be a source of strength. We CAN make a difference. Instead of being fearful we can be bold.

I LIKED THIS PRAYER WHICH WAS INCLUDED IN ONE OF THE LINKS THAT CAME FORM THE ARCHDIOCESE THIS WEEK. IT IS A PRAYER FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF DENVER.

Lord Jesus you came into the world to heal our infirmities and to endure our sufferings. You went about healing all and bringing comfort to those in pain and need. We come before you now in time of illness, asking that you may be a source of strength in body, courage in spirit and patience in pain.

May we join ourselves more closely to you on the cross and in your suffering, that through them we may draw patience and hope. Assist us and restore us to health so that united more closely to your family the Church we may give praise and honour to your name. Amen.