

## Palm Sunday 2020 (A)

### Summary: What is Holy Week for?

Lurking at the back of my mind is a terrifying sense that preaching in Holy Week should be the best preaching of the year – of a whole ministry – I'm sure it comes in part from the significance of the events we commemorate, the energy we pour into the liturgies, the weight of the scriptures we read but too because I'm spoilt with excellent Holy Week preachers. This week we hope, unlike the others of the liturgical year, the sermons will eschew games, lapses in logic, verbal fireworks for words that will illumine the human condition, reveal the inner workings of the Divine economy but most important of all stick my faith onto the post of the cross and make it live.

So, no pressure then!

And this year we're confined, sitting before computers, laptops, 'phones itching with our addict brain's longing for another dopamine high...

So what does the Scripture say? Usually the emotional and physical weight of the Passion Gospel result in a shorter sermon perhaps highlighting the subthemes of the preachers' week (in the Early Church the sermon was omitted!) ; but this year, in Confinement, I want you to consider how God is coming to you this week? The shorter Passion, which for reasons of time, that I read this morning misses the anointing of Jesus's feet with ointment, missing the balance of the beauty with the gritty reality that follows. Breathe in that scent. You'll have to imagine that scent – filling your whole living space – and the following text. Where the suicide of Judas, in the ancient world not inevitably a moral crime; and Pilate's wife's dream, so redolent of our own age in its obsession with stars and crystals and the earth's energies; and Pilate's handwashing perhaps a writers reflection on the agony of the rebellion against Rome and the destruction of the Temple, each tip us into the confusing, confused scenes of the camera role of Holy Week.

Because that's what Holy Week is about. An imaginative entering into the human reality of Jesus's last week in Jerusalem.

And we're used to that. To the artistic creation, in music, choreography, art and poetry, of the world in which our Saviour died and rose some 2000 years ago. But this year we are invited in our confinement to go further.

Thomas Merton, the influential spiritual writer, Cistercian monk and peace campaigner, died in the mid-sixties in Bangkok, electrocuted in his shower. After his last lecture a nun asked him why he hadn't sought to convert his hearers – in Buddhist Thailand - to the Gospel?

'I think today its more important for us to so let God live in us that others may feel God and come to believe in God because they feel how God lives in us.'<sup>1</sup>

And that is what I pray for you this week – that *your* week might be a coming closer to God's love for you – and for those whose lives you touch upon that *they* might be filled with the sweet smell of your love for Jesus.

520 words

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<sup>1</sup> From a lecture by Sister Mary Luke Tobin; [http:// fatherlouie.blogspot.com/2012/12/mertons-last-words.html](http://fatherlouie.blogspot.com/2012/12/mertons-last-words.html) accessed 5/4/20