

Palm Sunday Short Reflection:

Friends I offer this short reflection in the name of the Creator, the Redeemer and Sustainer of all life.

Holy week is about a time past where this man, this God-man, encountered the anger, hostility, rigidity, pride and unjust power of human political and religious systems.

And it is also about a present time – a time where you and I are called to reflect on these same systems in our time.

Holy Week is about a community of first century friends who experienced hope, expectation, triumph, and then a breakdown of trust that led to death, grief and loss.

And it is also about us, a community of individuals in a time of hopeful anticipation, a time of deep doubt, a time of sorrow, a time of togetherness, a time of loneliness...

I invite you to bring your whole selves into this week and to allow these historic events to mingle with our current ones – opening to the Spirit's gentle transformation.

I offer this example recorded by Michael Perham in his book: *The Way of Christlikeness: Being Transformed by the Liturgies of Holy Week*.

He writes:

“It was during my time as a parish priest in Poole that something else very significant happened to me during Holy Week.

In 1992 my father, who lived 25 miles away from me in Dorchester, was dying of cancer. He was at home being cared for by my mother. It was touch and go whether he would make it to Easter.

Through Holy Week and the first days of Easter I was going backwards and forwards between Poole and Dorchester leading the Holy Week services in my church and visiting my father.

On Maundy Thursday I presided at the Eucharist of the Last Supper in the church and stayed for a while after for the Watch that we kept in the darkened church till midnight.

People came and went, some stayed longer than others, but always there were those ‘watching with Christ’, sharing the Gethsemane experience. I didn't stay long, because I had the drive to Dorchester and, when I reached my parents' home, I continued the Watch, but now at my father's bedside.

I was back in Poole and in the church in time to conclude the Watch there at midnight. It was, of course, all about making connections, the story of Jesus, the liturgy that celebrated the story and the personal experience all coming together in a deeply moving way.

Next day, Good Friday, I shared in all the liturgical celebrations in church which, that year included the words of Jesus from the cross. I was struck by their brevity. They were exclamations more than sentences, cries for help or cries of accomplishment.

How much it must have cost Jesus to speak as he hung there. Then I was on the road again to Dorchester to be with my father. He was quite distressed that afternoon, for he wanted to talk to me about his funeral, as it happened, in particular about his hope that some of his friends would play part of the Elgar string quartet.

But he was having such difficulty in speaking. Communication was very difficult. Again I found myself making connections. Jesus struggling to say important things through the pain of the cross, my father struggling to say important things, despite the drugs to relieve his pain, as his death drew near.

I was able on Easter Day to bring Holy Communion to my father. Again, there had been a sharing in the liturgy in church, with all its alleluias and its joy in the Risen Lord, and its meeting with Christ like the two who travelled on Easter evening to Emmaus. I was able to travel to Dorchester and enable him to share, for the last time on earth, in the Easter sacrament and to sense the presence of the Risen Christ in the room”

We move from the liturgy to these ‘real life’ experiences to make connections,

- To see that in the experience of Christ is the experience of every person,
- to see how a lifetime of trying to follow Christ in the way of the cross gives to those suffering and near to death strength.

As we keep Holy Week may it make us open, sensitive and faithful in all the testing experiences of human life.

May God be with you as you walk the way of the cross this week.
Amen.