



## **Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord**

**2/3 April 2023**

**Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh**

On Friday 31 March I was celebrating Mass for a Pilgrim Group at the Parish Church in Knock, the International Shrine of Our Lady, in the West of Ireland. I was struck by the alternative (the second) Collect offered for the Mass:

“O God, who in this season give your Church the grace to imitate devoutly the Blessed Virgin Mary in contemplating the Passion of Christ, grant we pray, through her intercession, that we may cling more firmly each day to your Only Begotten Son and come at last to the fullness of his grace.”

I have always liked to include the option to pray the Stations of the Cross, which I recommend especially in Passiontide, from the perspective of Our Lady. I wondered why this second Collect focussing on Mary’s contemplating the Passion of her Son was offered in the new missal in English translation from the Feast of the Annunciation 2011.

I found that for centuries the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady was celebrated at Mass on Friday of the first week of Passiontide: just as we celebrated the joy of her being Mother of God after the Birth of Jesus at Christmas, it was at the Cross she became our Mother too.

The Seven Sorrows of Our Lady is a commemoration of the fulfilment of the prophecy made by the old man Simeon at the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple. The commemoration of Our Lady of Sorrows remained on this day in the 1962 Missal, but has now been placed in September after the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. However, it is still kept on this day in various traditions at local level, especially in Spanish speaking countries, and in particular the Philippines.

Passiontide is about accompanying Jesus in His Passion – in the Roman Rite it is the final two weeks before Easter, a time to focus on Him in His Passion and accompany Him on His way to Calvary. The Church becomes more sombre, which is reflected in the custom of covering the Cross and statues of saints (the Cross until Good Friday, and other images until the celebration of the Resurrection at the Vigil on Easter Sunday).

**Monsignor Daniel McHugh**

Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese

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Palm Sunday reading of the Passion is a preview of what was to take place on Good Friday – the Church beckons us to look towards the Cross and see Christ sacrifice Himself for us in His immense love for us. After Palm Sunday we follow Jesus on His final days in Jerusalem.

Recently on Pilgrimage in Walsingham I made time before Mass in the Slipper Chapel, the National Shrine of Our Lady, to pray the Stations in the grounds close to the Basilica. There I found each Station commemorating the Way of the Cross is prayerfully considered from the perspective of Jesus and from the perspective of Mary.

I noted a post from Father Lawrence Lew OP, whose lovely pictures we use in the Burning Bush Vlog, reminding us that in 2020, in the heart of the Pandemic, Pope Francis focussed in a Homily on the devotion that marks the Friday before Passion Sunday. “Today”, Francis said, “it will do us good to think about Our Lady’s sorrows and to thank her because she accepted to be a Mother .... It is good for me” said the Pope. “late in the evening, when I pray the Angelus, to pray these seven sorrows as a remembrance of the Mother of the Church, who, with so much pain, gave birth to all of us.”

The first few days of Holy Week offer us the opportunity to pray and reflect on the Passion through the Stations of the Cross with Jesus and Mary.

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