

Palm Sunday

This weekend is Saturday the 4 and Sunday the 5 April, Palm Sunday, beginning Holy Week.

The monks of Pluscarden Abbey sing: 'Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.' As I begin to pray, I too commend my spirit to the Lord. I place myself in God's hands during this time of prayer, putting all my hope and all my trust in him.

This week is the most beautiful and the most important of the Church's year. It is the drama of our salvation and our life. It is also a week of profound renewal. We renew our baptismal life because we see again the battle that God in Christ wins against all the powers of darkness and destruction in our world and in our lives.

The best way of praying this week is simply to follow it. All we have to do in our prayer is be open and receptive, content to follow and to receive what God chooses to give us. In this way our prayer enters into the way Christ lives it. He allows himself to be taken on a journey by the Father – 'thy will be done.' So, let scripture take you on this road. Be attentive to it; notice its details, entrust yourself to it. Don't fill up your prayer with too many words or thoughts or petitions, 'For your heavenly Father knows all that you need.' Let each period of prayer begin simply by asking for the grace of this week: to be close to Christ as he does the will of the Father. To touch something of the mystery of his life and love. Try and touch something of that mystery now as we hear Matthew's account of Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week...

Take a moment to contemplate what really is in store from Palm Sunday to Good Friday. Jesus seems to be in control here from the outset. He knows what needs to be done, and directs the action. He sends his closest friends to get all that he needs ready. If you are one of those friends, how do you react to all of this?

The crowd get caught up in the excitement of it all. Each of them has a part to play, throwing down their cloaks and waving palm branches. If you're part of this crowd, how does it feel to be involved in this unexpected event?

On the edge of the scene are the Roman authorities, anxious to keep order at a festival when the city is crowded and it would be easy for things to get out of control. If you're with the Roman garrison here, what's your response to this noisy demonstration?

As you listen to the story again, see if you can get any sense of what it all means to the one at the centre of the action, Jesus.

You've approached this reading from various viewpoints: that of the disciples, of the crowd, of the Romans, and even of Jesus. In these last few moments, speak to that same Jesus now of what you have seen and heard. And let him, in turn, speak to you.