THE NEW SHOFAR

But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. — St. Paul

Palm Sunday

Holy Week: offering us Light in darkness

It is helpful to view this coming Holy Week as a time between two key events – Palm Sunday and Good Friday, the day of the crucifixion of the very king the crowds had welcomed into Jerusalem. We should not jump forward too quickly to Easter Sunday morning and the glorious resurrection but sit in quiet contemplation pondering our own sins and failings, along with those areas of our spiritual lives when we have been less than the Disciples our Saviour has called us to be and to become.

While our world appears to be caught up in more of what appear to be endless wars; while the poor and vulnerable are abandoned and we are fed lies and false promises as though they were truths, we can feel that we are again in aa time of darkness. Who among us has not been tempted at times to join our cry with the cry of Jesus on the cross: *My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?* What can we do? What should we be doing? How do we live as Christians in this difficult time? Fully celebrating this 2026 Holy Week provides us with an opportunity to move beyond feelings of powerlessness, uncertainty and fear by meditating before God on who we are as disciples. Jesus has left us his core prayer, and when we pray it, we consecrate ourselves to be for others, like Jesus.

Holy Week – God's love and saving power amidst darkness

The passion stories in the Gospel accounts provide for us every title by which Jesus has been called: Son of Man, Son of God, Messiah, Christ and King of the Jews. Jesus acknowledged that those words were correct, but with a significant caveat: these titles did not carry the meaning his interrogators attached to them. As he would demonstrate to the end, God's love is His genuine power in the world, though it continues to be one that works through humble service, nothing more.

Holy Week begins with Jesus at the table with his disciples celebrating his Last Supper with them. Clearly aware that he was on the brink of suffering, he summarised his mission in the blessing and breaking of the bread. He equated the bread with his body and the cup with his blood: his entire self, the fullness of who he was as God's Son made man. As he had done throughout his mission, he offered his whole self to them. Following the breaking of bread, Jesus gave his disciples the costliest commandment of all: "Do this in memory of me." But do what?

Costliest commandment?

We underestimate the power of this command of Jesus along with the divine expectations of those who repeat it down though history into our present time. This command referred to far more than a ritual with bread and wine. It asserted that communion in him is implied demonstrating God's love and offering our own lives for

others, all the way to the “cross”. It celebrates our dying that others may find life – and all that means – just as the Lord died for us that we may live forever.

Jesus had given them the perfect answer as a response to an argument about who was the greatest among the apostles. So important was the answer to this question that he repeated it a second time because they had a track record of being unwilling and unable to take the words of Jesus to heart. Now, immediately after breaking the bread of his life with him, they violated his command by posturing for importance. Jesus, accustomed to them, responded to their dispute saying: "*I am among you as one who serves, and thus, the greatest among you act as servants*." After that, he led them to the Mount of Olives, where he was used to praying.

From the first days of his ministry Jesus had taught his disciples to pray. Now, they watched him in a most passionate exchange with his Abba. Knowing that he was sent to embody the love of God and expose the impotence of lies, violence and blatant evil, he consecrated himself again to obedience, obeying the Father even to death, death on the cross. It is here that his witness offers us a way to live in and through the darkest moments that may come our way: He prayed to do God's will, to reveal the power of divine love through his seemingly disastrous confrontation with the power of darkness. All they had to do was keep their eyes on him and follow.

From the supper to the cross, Jesus' faith was tested as never before. His own emotions as he was arrested, tortured, lied about and finally condemned surely deepened his compassion for the fearful disciples who ran away in fear and were scattered, unable to entrust themselves to God's power. As he was arrested, Jesus proclaimed an announcement that may have terrified even himself, he admitted: "*now is the hour, the time for the power of darkness.*

Holy Week calls for concentrated sacrifice and prayer

In that darkness, religious and civil authorities goaded him to answer the most important question of a human life: Who do you say that you are? Was he the Messiah? His responses indicated that his way of being Messiah was beyond their comprehension. He called himself the Son of Man and they asked, "Are you the Son of God?" His enigmatic response condemned him: *You say that I am*, a declaration that his very vulnerability revealed an image of God that they would not tolerate.

We know the rest: With trumped up charges and a fanatical mob, they arranged for his crucifixion. He responded by praying for those who hated him and proclaimed salvation to a criminal crucified with him. Jesus' last words were, "Father, into your hands, I commend my spirit." He kept hope that the Father was there for him, even to the darkest end.

This is week where we are invited to bring our lives, our world before God our Father, approaching him as did his only Son. We offer to God our broken world and our less that stellar spiritual lives, believing that as our Saviour died that we may live that same Heavenly Father will acknowledges the wishes of His Son and fill us with Light.