

Come as pilgrims to Jerusalem this week!

It was the month of *Nisan*. The winter rains were gentle tapering off. Spring was beginning to warm the Galilean hills; the fig trees were budding. Every Spring reminded Jesus of the nearness of God's reign, filling the earth with new life. The weather was pleasant. People were preparing to go up as pilgrims to Jerusalem, to celebrate the great Passover feast. It would be a three or four day walk from Galilee; they could comfortably sleep outdoors on the way. And the moon was getting brighter. Jesus told his disciples of his decision: he wanted to make the pilgrimage with them.

What impelled him to make that trip? Did he simply want to join his people once more in the Passover celebration, as one pilgrim among others? Until now, Jesus had been proclaiming the kingdom of God in the villages of Galilee, in a rural rather than an urban setting. But now this would be an opportune time to extend his ministry to Jerusalem. The holy city was the centre of life and faith for the chosen people. Jews all over the world turn their eyes and hearts to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover feast. The disciples found it an alarming prospect that Jesus should be going, and he was not unaware of the dangers that faced him there. His message would upset and antagonise the temple leaders and the Roman authorities. But Jesus went up to the holy city anyway. And he would not be coming back.

They probably took the eastern road for their pilgrimage. They left Capernaum, walked the length of the Jordan river, passed through Jericho, and took the way that leads to the Mount of Olives. This is the best place to view the holy city in all its beauty and splendour. When they see it, pilgrims fall silent and then cry for joy. This is not Jesus' first visit to Jerusalem, but everything is different now. His heart is full of joy and sorrow, fear and hope.

From the Mount of Olives they can see the whole city. In the distance stands the old palace of Herod with its sumptuous halls and gardens, now the Jerusalem residence of the Roman Governor whose name is Pontius Pilate. But the pilgrims' eyes are most drawn to the place where the holy temple rises in splendour. This was the house of God! According to the historian Josephus, it was almost entirely covered with sheets of solid gold; at sunrise it shone with such brilliance that no one could look at it directly. In a few days the pilgrims would go here to offer their sacrifices, sing hymns of thanksgiving, and slaughter the lambs for the Passover meal.

As they enter Jerusalem, Jesus' group and many other pilgrims are singing for joy at the end of their long walk "*I rejoiced when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord*". At the gates of the city, Jesus has planned to make the last part of the trip by donkey, as a humble pilgrim who enters the city, wishing everyone peace. Enlivened by the festive mood of the Passover, his companions cheer him on. Some of them cut branches and foliage, others lay out their tunics as he passes. They are expressing their faith in the Kingdom he is preaching and demonstrating, and they are expressing to him their gratitude. It is a spontaneous act of homage. His entry on a donkey says more than many words could. He is seeking a reign of peace and justice for all, not an empire built through violence and oppression. Mounted on a small donkey, he appears to the pilgrims as a prophet, ushering in a new world and a new order, different from the one imposed by the Roman Generals on their horses. As a public act, proclaiming a non violent Kingdom could perhaps have been enough to lead, by itself, to a decree of execution.



And you know the rest of the story. **Only it is not a story**, it is the drama of God's salvation, and this week it is played out by the Lord in our midst, given to us a feast never to be forgotten. **This is the holiest of week in the year.**

Be proud this week to be Catholic.

Be proud to bear the name of Jesus and walk him in his passion.

Don't miss the feast! Palm Sunday leads us to the Upper Room of Holy Thursday, the glorious Passion of John on Good Friday and the lighting of the Paschal Candle on Saturday night.

Our Prayers for the sick: Maureen McKay, Andy McQuillan, Jim Simpson, Elizabeth Liddell, Tom Brown, Margaret Caullay, Heather Moffit, Susan McKay, Norman Hadden, Ray Conchie, Marie Manunga, Karen Dammer, Jackey Forrest - Moore, Catherine Gallacher, Marian Jackson;

for those who have died recently:

Father Roddy Johnston, Lorna Donnachie, Tom Brown, James Hart;

and for those whose anniversaries fall at this time:

Joan Clark, James and Meg Marr, Baby William Mudie, William Tait, Cecilia Wallace, Jenny Robertson; Tom McBride, James Crighton, Maureen Quinn, Alex Kiddie, Elizabeth Stanford, Ann Crawford, Peter Crawford, Mary Crawford, Mary Kelly; Monsignor Hugh McNally, Blair Brady Julia Rice, Diana Andrews Michael Duffy, Teresa Smith, Arthur Caswell, Agnes Stratton.

The Funeral arrangements for the late **Lorna Donachie RIP** are: Sunday 31 March at 5pm, Reception of Remains in the Cathedral; then on Monday 1 April at 10.30am, the Funeral Mass in the Cathedral.

The Funeral Mass for the late **Tom Brown RIP** will take place in the Cathedral on Tuesday 2 April at 10am.

Easter offering envelopes for St Mary's, Forebank are available at the back of the Church today.

Thank you for your generosity in last Sunday's collections of £749 in the Cathedral, £550 in St Mary's Forebank, and £629 in Our Lady of Good Counsel.

We would usually take the annual collection for the upkeep of the Holy Places in Jerusalem on Good Friday; however, in order not to disturb the solemnity of the Liturgy that day we shall take it instead on Sunday 7 April.

We had the final **Journey of faith** Session last Wednesday in St Mary's, Forebank; thanks to all who have supported our efforts for adult faith formation and to those who have encouraged our catechumens and candidates who will complete their initiation into the Church this Easter.