

PALM SUNDAY 2025 All Souls': **WERE YOU THERE?** dtw

'Were you there?' This question comes from the American Spiritual:
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

This Lent we have been caught up in the old, old Story. Some of us have been listening to one another's stories too. And some have been exploring Symbols of Hope. It has been a moving experience. Now, at the beginning of this holiest of weeks, the story of Jesus' Passion invites each one of us to enter fully into the Drama of our very Redemption.

We have manifold opportunities this week to **be there** with our Christ 'in heart and mind' every step of the way; to **be there** on that original week in Jerusalem, about the Year AD 30. The crowds gathering for the Passover... Picture Norwood, Payneham and St Peters Council Chambers as Pilate's Headquarters; we even have a Greenhill Road not far away. We have the chance to attend those final days of preparation with Jesus and his bewildered disciples, making this space first for the Stations of the Cross on Tuesday evening at St Theodore's, then our Upper Room on Thursday evening for the Washing of Feet and the Mass of the Lord's Supper. May we sense the turgid, tormenting build up to Jesus' betrayal, because during the supper, Judas slipped away in the darkness to betray Jesus. When supper was over, Jesus went with the others to Gethsemane to pray in the agony of bloody sweat. We too will watch in silent Vigil with Christ. Will *you* be there? Even the disciples found it hard to stay awake.

Jesus' trial takes place in the darkness and dawn of the early hours of Friday while we catch a little sleep and prepare to **be there** at the Cross in the moving Liturgy of the Lord's Passion at 9.30am, as if Stephen Tce was the very road to Golgotha and this Church was the place where he received his cross. Saturday, Easter Eve, in a real biblical sense becomes our 'Day of Preparation', not for the old Passover – but for our New Passover from Death to Life on Easter Day. Like the women who prepared spices associated with the embalming rites for their dead Lord, so we will come to anoint our Church with cleansing, new linen and flowers. The next day, Sunday, we commence our Liturgy with the lighting of the New Fire, the

Paschal Candle. We will reaffirm our Baptismal Vows and celebrate the Easter Eucharist.

The whole journey from this Palm Sunday through to Easter Sunday is one not to be missed. In fact, it is one rite called the Easter Triduum. May the dawning of that glorious day this time next week find us filled with anticipation, having travelled as faithful pilgrims in the Way of the Cross to the Victory of the Resurrection.

I often say “The Lord be with you” at the end of sermons but at the beginning of this Holy Week, it makes sense to turn it right around.

You be with the Lord. Amen

FOR INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP REFLECTION

1. Consider your Lenten journey. What similarities may have you experienced to the experiences of Jesus’ original disciples as they tried to understand his mission?
2. Does Palm Sunday meet your own expectations of ‘Jesus’ triumphal entry into the Holy City’? Why a donkey and not a horse? Why palm branches and not protest banners?
3. Why do you think Jesus’ righteous and pure intentions would only earn him betrayal and a cross? Are there modern-day parallels?
4. ‘They all forsook him and fled’. How could the disciples have acted differently? How would you have reacted?
5. Conclude with a prayer for those who feel betrayed, denied, forsaken in relationships, friendships, business dealings, international relations, the people of Ukraine, the Middle East, and other strife-filled places.