

My dear Little Flower,

I am looking forward to making the Great Holy Week Pilgrimage with you.

Holy Week and our journey begins on Palm Sunday as we reenact (making present) *the entrance of Jesus the King to Jerusalem on a donkey*. The palm fronds we hold on Palm Sunday signify victory over the prince of death. Entering the worship space we sing the same words with which the King was welcomed by the people and children: *Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*" When I was young, I remember my mom bringing these palms home. She said that we do this because we want the Lord to protect our home, that the hand of God might expel all adversity, bless and protect our dwelling place. Palm branches have been used in many traditions as an emblem of joy and victory over enemies.

Palm Sunday is also called "Passion Sunday" because as soon as the priests lead the faithful inside the church, around the Table of God's Word, we make the proclamation of the Passion of Jesus Christ. This proclamation of the Lord's Passion brings us into the heart of our salvation: the glory and victory of the Cross of Jesus Christ.

Our pilgrimage continues on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil. Holy Thursday or the celebration of the Lord's Supper reenacts Jesus' institution of the *First Holy Eucharist* by breaking bread with his disciples during Passover; and of the *Priesthood* by washing His disciples' feet. This act of washing taught His disciples the power of humility, self-giving love and service. He said: "So, if I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet... For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you". When I was a new seminarian, the celebration of Holy Thursday made me realize the power of God's love in my own life and vocation.

On Good Friday, the journey of the Son of God to save humankind is reenacted and proclaimed. In this celebration, the whole universal Church stands in prayer as they make themselves present for the Passion and Death of our Lord at the foot of the Cross.

On Holy Saturday, the Easter Vigil, the Church keeps watch, celebrating the resurrection of Christ in the sacraments, and awaiting his return in glory. It is the turning point of the Paschal Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil), the Passover of the new covenant, which marks Christ's passage from death to life. The Easter Vigil brings us ever deeper to our story of salvation, from **creation** of the world to the **recreation** of all things in Jesus Christ's resurrection story.

I invite you to engage, to experience, and to encounter the Person of Christ in these beautiful liturgical celebrations we make year after year. It is going to be an awesome journey!

Your parish priest,
Fr JC Merino