SUNDAY PLUS

THE GOD WHO SPEAKS

A Year of the Word

Hosanna!

"Hosanna to the Son of David!"

by Mary Bell

The greeting "Hosanna to the Son of David!" with which Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem was the salutation to a saviour, a deliverer. The people were carried away with enthusiasm for this healer from Galilee who just might be able to oust the Romans. Yet we know that he was riding his donkey into the greatest danger possible, fully aware of that danger. The subsequent events recounted in the Gospel: Judas' betrayal, Gethsemane, the trials before the high priest and Pilate, Peter's denial, his carrying of his cross to Calvary, crucifixion, the empty tomb; all that we call Jesus' passion, is sandwiched between two extraordinarily salvific events – the Last Supper and the resurrection.

For Matthew the Last Supper is a Passover meal at which Jews celebrate God's direct intervention to save the Israelites from slavery in Egypt in Moses' time. This holy meal is accompanied by many symbols. Jesus chose this occasion to introduce the ultimate symbol of his sacrifice. That he linked the broken unleavened bread with his own body to be broken on the cross was a masterstroke of inspiration. His words "Take, eat this is my body" have become for us the essential invitation to salvation which persists in all our lives to the present day. From these most unlikely beginnings it has become the source of our hope, our consolation in times of trouble, our passport to heavenly joy. In receiving the Eucharist we are offering thanksgiving for Jesus' saving action. It is our "Hosanna!"

Mary Bell is a retired teacher, U3A lecturer and devoted grandmother.

Living bread

by Claire Wright

I first fell in love with baking through the making of bread. Taking such simple ingredients – flour, water, salt, yeast – and mixing them, kneading them, transforming them into something which could sustain me, which could satisfy me… it was empowering and humbling all at the same time.

As a child, I watched both of my parents in their ritual of bread-making. I watched my mother stretch and fold the dough; I saw my father rap the bottom of a cooked loaf with his strong knuckles as he tested for "doneness". Baking bread is in my blood.

Sustaining, satisfying, but saving?

As I mix and stretch and rise and bake now, it can take my breath away as the smell of a freshly cooked loaf reminds me that Jesus comes to us still in this form. There is a living bread that can sustain me, satisfy me, and save me. He "give[s] a word of comfort to the weary". His name is Jesus.

Claire Wright is a Brighton-based freelance writer who runs a faith blog and a healthy family food website, all while taking care of two lively toddlers.

Loving Lord, what happened to the donkey you rode on Palm Sunday? Did it just return to its normal donkey existence or did people see it as special because it had carried you? Lord, let Holy Week change me and make me more conscious of your extraordinary love. ✠ Amen.

Prison Eucharist: breaking bread behind bars

by Fr Paul Douthwaite

For many Catholic prisoners the Eucharistic celebration is a lifeline where he or she no longer feels like a prisoner but is simply a member of the Church, the body of Christ.

In his prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, St Alphonsus describes the Eucharist as "full of compassion and of love, awaiting, calling and welcoming all those who come to visit". This takes on greater significance in the prison setting when, at Mass, prisoners are also able to experience the presence of a compassionate and forgiving Lord.

Living out Christ's command to "take, eat; this is my body" has greater significance behind bars: that this call was spoken by a man who would be arrested, convicted and sentenced to death on a cross – one who understands, because he has first-hand experience of what it is to be a prisoner.

Fr Paul Douthwaite is the National Catholic Chaplain for Prisons for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

"May Mary help us to experience Holy Week in a good way. May we learn from her: inner silence, the heart's gaze and the loving faith to follow Jesus on the Way of the Cross that leads to the joyous light of the resurrection."

Pope Francis

Stations of the Resurrection

Richard Q Greatrex
Foreword by
Denis McBride C.Ss.R.

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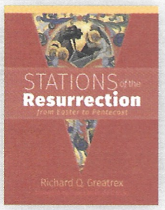

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This book travels with the reader from the sealed tomb to Pentecost

Today: Isaiah 50:4-7; Philippians 2:6-11; Matthew 26:14 – 27:66

Monday: Isaiah 42:1-7; John 12:1-11

Tuesday: Isaiah 49:1-6; John 13:21-33. 36-38

Wednesday: Isaiah 50:4-9; Matthew 26:14-25

Thursday: Exodus 12:1-8. 11-14; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-15

Friday: The Celebration of the Passion of the Lord: Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12; Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9; John 18:1 – 19:42

Saturday: The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night: Genesis 1:1 – 2:2; Genesis 22:1-18; Exodus 14:15 – 15:1; Isaiah 54:5-14; Isaiah 55:1-11; Baruch 3:9-15. 32 – 4:4; Ezekiel 36:16-28; Romans 6:3-11; Matthew 28:1-10

Next Sunday: Acts 10:34. 37-43; Colossians 3:1-4 or 1 Corinthians 5:6-8; John 20:1-9

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