

New Brighton, Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2022

## Low Sunday

“They have pierced my hands and my feet, they have numbered all my bones”<sup>1</sup>

“They shall look on Him whom they pierced”<sup>2</sup>

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

My dear brethren,

On this octave day of Easter, after a glorious and joyful celebration of the anniversary of our redemption, we are still invited to contemplate with a tender love our Saviour, victorious against death, sin, and Devil. Victorious through obedience, to repair the disobedience of the first man created! Victorious out of love of God for his creatures, against the evil hate of Satan, who didn't know or believe that He was the Son of God the promised Messiah, the One to come and accomplish any single prophecy about Him.

He was announced, we were expecting, we have been praying for four thousand years, as we sing in our Christmas Carols, and here He is, and will never leave us anymore. He is above us, attached upon the Cross at the top of our altar, and even outside, being above this area of New Brighton, since more than eighty years, until now, the Victorious Cross being the highest point of this part of our country.

We asked all along this journey of penance, while we were devoutly praying the stations of the Cross, we asked him “to nail our heart to His feet, that it ever remains there to love Him, and never more to leave Him”<sup>3</sup>.

We were deeply lucky, all along this Holy Week and Easter Week, to contemplate all the sufferings of our dear Redeemer, through the reproduction of the Holy Shroud of Turin, exposed at the back of our church, showing the immense love of our Saviour, who, being innocent was taken “like a lamb without voice before his shearer, so opened He not His mouth. In humility, His judgement was taken away: His generation, who shall declare; for His life shall be taken Earth”<sup>4</sup>, as we can read in the prophet Isaiah.

Today, as everything “has been consummated”<sup>5</sup>, and Our Lord is now victoriously risen from the dead, we should, we can, we must humbly approach Him, to testify with our own eyes, through the Faith, the evidence of the Resurrection. Like St Thomas, we contemplate the five wounds of Christ. The same wounds through which He suffered so much for the sake of most of us. These five wounds Jesus kept in his divine body after the Resurrection, as evidence of the Truth of His Passion. To also symbolise for all of us that all our pains, prayers and sacrifices will be ours, as part of our reward in our glorified body, when we will rise with Jesus at the end of the times.

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<sup>1</sup> Ps. XXII, 16-17.

<sup>2</sup> John, XIX, 37.

<sup>3</sup> Meditation for the stations of the Cross.

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah, LIII, 7.

<sup>5</sup> John, XIX, 30.

We can find several meanings in the five wounds of Christ: the hands, the feet and the heart. It's my honour and pleasure to call back to your memory several of these:

- The five incense grains that the Deacon fixed in the Paschal Candle, during the consecration of the candle for Easter Vigil;
- The five cross engraved on each altar stone;
- The five grains of your rosary beads, upon which you say the Our Father;
- The five fingers of your hand, joined together to make a beautiful sign of the Cross, starting and finishing each of your prayers, each of your days.

St Bernard de Clairvaux wrote himself a prayer to honour the wounds of Christ: "*Salve mundi Salutare*", praying the Holy Wounds of Christ, one by one, and adding two more:

- Adoring the feet, nailed to the Cross;
- Adoring the knees, upon which Jesus fell three times;
- Adoring the hands, pierced and attached to the Cross;
- Adoring the sides, struck by the scourging at the pillar;
- Adoring the breast, hit by the soldiers;
- Adoring the Heart, pierced by St Longinus;
- And finally adoring the head, crowned with thorns, and so many tiles slapped, and covered with spit.

Dietrich Buxtehude took that poem to write seven cantatas for choir, and Johan Sebastian Bach received from it some inspiration to compose the choir of St Matthew's Passion.

The devotion to the five wounds is an opportunity made to us, to approach our Saviour, humbly like St Thomas, who firstly didn't believe, but then adored the mystery.

Like newly born children, as we sung in the Introït, let's come to Jesus. We are indeed newly born by the Grace of the Baptism, which made us participant of the life of Jesus, the same Life which he's having and maintains Him constantly united with the Father and the Holy Ghost. The same Life which is pushing us to come to Him to stay with Him.

Even the Gregorian melody of the introit is inviting us to the lightness and the joy of the children running towards their father, their mother. The Gregorian mode used to ornate those beautiful and simple words is expressing the spiritual childhood that we must all feel and live during this Eastertide.

We truly are like St Thomas today, and our astonishment is marked with the tune of the Kyriale that we will sing all along Eastertide: showing our surprise before this incredible Truth: Jesus is risen, and he showed Himself to us. Firstly we didn't want to admit it, but He showed Himself to us: He asked us to come and see, contemplate, adore the wounds in His hands and His feet, to place our hand into His side, to receive from Him the Truth he wants, out of His immense love, to share with us. The Gregorian mode again is expressing our Faith: as the melody stops, it seems to continue in silence with our prayer.

The communion antiphon is taken from the words of Jesus Himself, and again, we cannot hear in the melody, any reproach from Jesus because of our lack of faith. We could imagine a smiling father looking with tenderness at his son who couldn't believe the gift he was to receive: "Come and put your hand and know the place of the nails, and be not faithless, but believing"<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> John, XX, 27.

Let's come and adore our Divine Redeemer. He's there, victorious, expecting us like a father is expecting his child, ready to forgive him the past offenses, because he was dead, and now he's alive again, he was lost and is found.

He wants to bless us with His divine hands, pierced by the nails, he wants to open our way to Heaven, following the path he showed, walking on His feet, marked with the wounds, he wants to share with us the furnace of Charity from His heart.

He's there, upon the Cross above our Altar: his feet are attached: he's waiting for us. His arms are extended: He's waiting for us. His side is opened: he wants to share with us a treasure of grace. His crowned head is bowing towards us: he wants to give us a sign of peace and reconciliation.

Jesus is waiting to give us his divine blessing, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.