

New Brighton, Sunday 26th March 2023

Passion Sunday

“Hoc corpus, quod pro vobis tradetur.”¹

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

“This is My Body, which shall be given up for you: this is the cup of the new covenant in My Blood, says the Lord; Do this as often as you receive it, in remembrance of Me.”²

We are just entering Passiontide. Crosses and statues are covered in violet, to help us purify our affections, and be focused upon the spiritual mystery we’re about to celebrated again. This spirit of penance is shown all throughout the liturgy this morning. From the accents of seriousness of the introit, the trust to the Lord expressed by the sinner in the gradual and tract, the solemn speech of Our Lord about his filiation, which will deserve his condemnation later on, we are reminded about this gift, fruit of all the sufferings of our blessed Lord, this gift which is offered to us as many time as we need, to support us in our journey, in our participation to the sufferings of the Lord: Holy Eucharist.

The Holy Church, knowing that our spirits were in need to be cheered up, as it seems that all black clouds of sins and wrath were overshadowing us, presents us with the white host, the immaculate body of Our Lord, which we will receive during this mass, and which is the subject of our adoration, praise and thanksgiving in the communion antiphon. The liturgy uses the same words the Lord instituted the Sacrament with, to give us that light of hope in midst of such darkness.

They are the words from the Last Supper. We can see two parts in that antiphon: the first, which is a simple say of the Body and Blood of the Saviour, offered to the Father as a victim for the sin of the world. Second, the promise made to the world: this sacrifice will be living and you may benefit from it when needed, as often as you can, every day until the end.

The Gregorian melody of this two lines text expresses this balance between these two parts: calm and quiet for the first part which says the mystery, joyful, cheerful, and quite solemn for the second part.

Today, everything seems to go against us: the world, ourselves... But we know that the Lord already won the battle for us. And holy Eucharist, this token of paradise, is given again, to comfort us in our Lenten resolutions.

We probably failed them a number of time these last days. We forgot about them. Passiontide, which the liturgical difference we saw this morning entering into church, offers us the right opportunity to seriously take them again. Let’s not fail these two last weeks of our journey to Easter.

¹ I Cor., XII, 24. Passion Sunday, Communion Antiphon.

² Ibid.

“Each day we ought to renew our resolutions and arouse ourselves to fervor as though it were the first day of our religious life. We ought to say: "Help me, O Lord God, in my good resolution and in Your holy service. Grant me now, this very day, to begin perfectly, for thus far I have done nothing."

As our intention is, so will be our progress; and he who desires perfection must be very diligent. If the strong-willed man fails frequently, what of the man who makes up his mind seldom or half-heartedly? Many are the ways of failing in our resolutions; even a slight omission of religious practice entails a loss of some kind.”³

Following the teaching of the author of the *Imitation of Christ*, and lifted by the encouragement of St Francis de Sales, our patron saint, let’s renew our resolutions, and strengthen them with the holy power of the divine body we’re about to receive again:

“I would have you know that we must never cease to make good resolutions, even though we may be well aware that, generally speaking, we do not carry them into effect; yea, even if we should see that it will be out of our power to do so when the opportunity offers. Indeed, we must make them with still more firmness than if we felt within ourselves courage enough to succeed in our enterprise, saying to Our Lord: “It is true that I shall not have strength enough to do or to bear such and such a thing of myself, but I rejoice in my infirmity, because it will be Thy strength which will do it in me”.⁴ Relying on this help, go forth courageously to the battle, and doubt not but that you will gain the victory. Our Lord treats us as a good father and a good mother treat their child, who is allowed to walk alone as long as he is on the soft grass of a meadow, or some mossy carpet, because even if he were to fall he could not do himself much harm; but on rough and dangerous roads they carry the little one tenderly in their arms.”⁵

Lift up your hearts! The victory and reward is at hand!

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

³ Thomas A. Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, I, 19, The Practices of a Good Religious.

⁴ II Cor., XII, 9-10.

⁵ St Francis de Sales, *Spiritual conferences*, 9th, On religious modesty.