

## LIVERPOOL ARCHDIOCESAN CENTRE FOR EVANGELISATION

*From the Press Officer:*  
**Peter Heneghan**  
Tel (0151) 522 1007  
Mobile: 07980 821273  
Fax (0151) 522 1008  
Email: [p.heneghan@rcaol.co.uk](mailto:p.heneghan@rcaol.co.uk)



Croxteth Drive  
Sefton Park  
Liverpool  
L17 1AA

Web: [www.liverpoolcatholic.org.uk](http://www.liverpoolcatholic.org.uk)

**Homily preached by the Right Reverend Thomas Williams, Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Liverpool at Solemn Mass of Palm Sunday. 11.00 am on 13 April 2014 in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King, Liverpool.**

‘May all of us have the courage to walk in the presence of the Lord, with the Cross of the Lord, to build the Church on the Blood of the Lord, which is shed on the Cross, and to profess the one glory, Christ Crucified. In this way the Church will go forward.’

Not my words, but the words of our Pope Francis on the First Mass after his election. The Cross and Passion, the death of our Saviour, which we have, so beautifully just been reminded of, is a mystery which must lie at the core of our faith; and this faith, in order to be something real and active, must act to propel us forward with hope and love and with passion particularly in this world of ours.

In the drama which has just been played out for us, we must realise that we, yes each and every one of us, are the crowd. Singing our selfish praises for what we want to see, and then being consumed with the negative side of human nature. We have ample evidence in this world of ours of anxiety, mockery, cynicism, jumping to quick and unjust judgements; inflicting pain and suffering on others, punishing the innocent and wrapping up truth with deception.

The baying crowds at Calvary can now be seen daily by simply turning on the television, or listening to the news, or very often, just listening to ourselves. It is a drama in which we all play a part: from Judas to the good thief, from the denial of Peter to the weeping of the women of Jerusalem. But we, as a Church, must go forward. We will follow Christ by ascending from hell to the bright promise of immortality. This tree of the Cross saves us, all of us, from the consequences of that other tree: the tree of self sufficiency, arrogance, the pride of wanting to know all this according to our own limited parameters and low horizons.

Now particularly this year our Holy week also coincides with many earth shattering events in our own lives and in the City with the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hillsborough disaster. And at this moment there is a Coroner’s Court in Warrington which convenes to re-visit that dreadful afternoon and listens again to the witnesses, especially the families as they tell their stories of pain, suffering and yes, of heroism and courage.

I think that it is no mean coincidence that our football teams are also giving us cause for pride at this time and even bringing smiles to faces. By playing good and attractive football they are reminding us also that sport does not replace religion or faith; but that when it reflects

courage and team work and care for the individual, the passion of belonging, the strong sense of identity, and this is what the teams are showing, then they truly reflect the passion and commitment of the community and City they represent.

I have an Easter prayer for our City and for all those affected especially by events of horror and trauma in their lives and also particularly as well the Hillsborough experience. I wrote it with a good friend of mine, Phil Jump, the Baptist Minister of the Merseyside Region and himself a 'Reds' fan. I offer this prayer for all of us on this sombre, this Passionate, this Holy Week:

'We pray to a God of justice and peace,  
Lord hold us fast to the dignity which is restored;  
that truth unwrapped from deception, has paved the way for justice and peace to be found.  
Give each of us the grace to walk with dignity,  
help us to live lives that bear testimony to our true character that has now been  
acknowledged.  
Grant diligence and courage to those who must now take forward the cause of justice,  
and patience to those who long for its coming.  
Bless O Lord this ongoing and noble pursuit,  
and thwart any plan to stand in its way.  
Bless the waiting and the hoping especially of the families, the survivors, the supporters  
and all who feel the pain of these events.  
Bless those whose endeavours may indeed bear the fruit of justice  
Bless our people, our City and those throughout the world who suffer injustice.'

And I may add to that prayer something which is appropriate, especially for today: that we, as followers of the suffering Christ, may move forward with love in our hearts and with care and compassion in our actions. May we not walk alone, but may we walk in the words of the hymn:

'Walk with me O my Lord  
through the darkest night and brightest day.  
Be by my side O Lord.  
Hold my hand and guide me on my way.'

**13 April 2014**