

EASTER BLESSING

Many years ago, I was given this little stone – a parishioner on pilgrimage to the Holy Land had picked it up from beneath an Olive tree in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was her words that had such a deep impact on me as she said; “If stones could tell us of what they have witnessed, maybe this stone saw Jesus and His Disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, maybe the robe of one of them, Jesus’ even, brushed across this stone. It may even be possible that Our Lord trod on it or knelt on it as He prayed. But, Robert, I hope this stone reminds you of Christ always and especially in Holy Week.”

Gethsemane was, at first, a quiet place for Jesus and His Disciples to pray as a family of friends. For Jesus it became the place where He was at one with God, His Father, in both His anguish and the resignation that even He, like us, live to do God’s Will. “*As Christ said, “Nevertheless not My Will but Thine be done.”*”

But the Garden became also a place of chaos, anger and ultimately betrayal when Christ said to Judas. “*Would you betray me with a kiss?*”

For the Disciples it became the place where their fears overwhelmed them and they ran away and left Him.

In minutes, therefore, this stone was a silent witness to prayer, anguish, betrayal and the chaos of Jesus' arrest, before peace returned and again it became a silent witness for centuries of pilgrims who would visit the Garden of Gethsemane simply to be closer to Christ.

It is but a little stone but it is rarely out of my sight at home and more often than not it is in my pocket when I celebrate Mass – and especially today, Easter Day. For today, it reminds me also of the stone that was rolled away and became the silent witness to the Resurrection. But it is a silence we have inherited, as Christ said to the Pharisees when they tried to quieten the people; “*Jesus*

answered and said to them, I tell you that, if they were quiet, even the stones would cry out. Blessed be the King that comes in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.”

On this Easter Day may you find peace in your heart to pray, may the darkness of the past days bring light to you all, may the chaos of these difficult days bring the silence to your anguish and the Risen Christ bring you the fulfilment of new hopes, a renewed faith and new life; and the Blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and remain with you always. AMEN