

## Palm Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> April 2019

This afternoon may seem something like liturgical overload: Blessing of Palms; Procession; and, just now, Passion (that somewhat lengthy reading of the Passion according to St Matthew). Without wishing to unduly add anything to this ‘overload’, as it were, I would nevertheless like to briefly reflect upon the very last part of the Passion (hopefully, still fresh in your minds) and upon something distinctly liturgical.

“And Joseph taking the body, wrapped it up in a clean linen cloth (*Et accepto corpore, Joseph involvit illud in sindone munda*)” (Mt 27:59). Joseph of Arimathea here takes the body down from the cross: a scene of course known as the ‘Deposition’, a version by Fra Angelico appearing in today’s missalette. He then wraps the body “in a clean linen cloth”. This is where the liturgical dimension comes in (and I don’t mean anything ‘liturgical’



regarding the Roman liturgy, traditional or modern, but rather the Byzantine, Eastern, liturgy): the priest, when he covers the diskos (namely, the paten) and the chalice with a veil, symbolising the “clean linen cloth” used at Christ’s burial, says: “The noble Joseph, having taken thy most pure Body down from the Tree and wrapped it in pure linen and covered it with spices, laid it in a new tomb”.

That same “Body” which was scourged, crowned with thorns, crucified, laid in the tomb by Joseph of Arimathea, and eventually risen from the tomb, will truly lie here upon this altar.