

Joseph is venerated as a saint in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. The wife of a Romanian Orthodox priest once told me this joke: *Joseph went home to his wife after the burial of Jesus. He said to her that he had had to bury someone in the tomb designated for their eventual deaths. She was shocked and distressed, protesting that they had paid a lot of money so that they could be buried together in a beautiful garden; now they would have nowhere decent to lay their heads. Joseph told her not to fret since the tomb would only be occupied for 3 days!* Legends abound about Joseph. Since early English Christianity it has been rumoured that Joseph visited England with the teenage Jesus. The legend builds on the fact that merchants from the Roman Empire imported tin from West Country mines. Blake's poem "Jerusalem" is based on this legend. "....*And was the Holy Lamb of God on England's pleasant pastures seen...?*" etc.

NEXT WEEEK, EASTER SUNDAY: ...*Mary of Clopas*

Stephen S

Entrance antiphon: Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel. Hosanna in the highest.

First Reading: Isaiah 50: 4-7

Psalms 21: Response: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Second Reading: Philippians 2: 6-11

Gospel Acclamation: Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory! Christ was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. But God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all names. Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!

Gospel: Luke 22: 14-23:56

Memorial Acclamation: We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.



Artist: *Jean-Hippolyte Flandrin*

Palm Sunday of the Pasion of the Lord Cycle C, 2022

Weekly Reflection: Minor Play- ers in the Passion (6): St Joseph of Arimathea

Arimathea is a word of Hebrew origin, 'ramah' signifying 'hill'. St Luke says it was a town in Judea. Four places in Palestine are identified with the name 'ramah'. One is the birthplace of the Old Testament priest, Samuel, and the place where the young David, fleeing from Saul, sought Samuel's assistance. It is this historic location with which Joseph is usually associated. The four Gospels give us some information about Joseph of Arimathea (St Matthew 27:57-60; St Mark 15:43-46; St Luke 23:50-53; St John 19:38-42). He was a good and righteous man. He was wealthy. He was a respected member of the council (Sanhedrin) who had not consented to their purpose and deed (condemning Jesus). He was a disciple of Jesus, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God. His discipleship was secret "*for fear of the Jews*". He took courage and asked Pilate for Jesus' body which he took down from the cross and wrapped in a shroud. He laid the body in his own new tomb which he had hewn in the rock. The tomb was in a garden near to where Jesus had been crucified.

As a wealthy member of the Sanhedrin Joseph had much to lose by being a disciple of Jesus. That, presumably, was a good reason for his having kept his discipleship secret. What he witnessed in Jesus' condemnation and crucifixion emboldened him to go to Pilate and ask to be permitted to bury the corpse. Jewish law and custom required that when a person was executed the Council had the duty to have the deceased buried properly, but not in a place of honour such as a family tomb. Joseph could have used his Sanhedrin membership as authority to ask Pilate's permission to take charge of the burial. Jesus' burial may be seen as foretold in Isaiah (53:9): "*He was given a grave with the wicked, and his tomb is with the rich*"