

## Reflection Friday 4<sup>th</sup> Week Lent 2024

The Jewish Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot in Hebrew) mentioned in the gospel is celebrated for seven days between late September and late October. Sukkot is one of three major pilgrimage festivals, along with Passover and Shavuot, when the ancient Israelites travelled to the Temple in Jerusalem to offer sacrifices and worship God. The origins of Sukkot are found in the Torah. It celebrates the end of the harvest season and commemorates the forty-year period during which the Israelites wandered in the desert, living in temporary shelters. The Israelites are commanded to dwell in booths or sukkahs for seven days, to remember that God made them dwell in booths when he brought them out of Egypt.

Sukkot involves building and dwelling in a sukkah, a temporary hut with a roof made of branches, symbolizing the fragile and transient dwellings the Israelites lived in during their desert wanderings. Families eat their meals in the sukkah and some even sleep in it, weather permitting. Another ritual involves taking four species: citron, palm frond, myrtle twigs, and willow twigs. These are bound together and waved in all directions to symbolize God's omnipresence and to pray for rain for the crops.

The Gospel reminds us that Jesus was under threat well before his triumphal entry into Jerusalem shortly before the Jewish Passover. He wanted his death to coincide with the Passover to help us understand that he gave himself freely for our salvation which was to be understood in the light of the Passover in Egypt and recognise the freedom that he won for us in his death and resurrection. Freedom not just for a group or a nation but for all people and for all time.