

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

April 14, 2019

Readings: Luke 19:28-40; Isaiah 50:4-7; Philippians 2:6-11; Luke 22:14-23:56

What does the Church expect of us this Passion Sunday, the traditional beginning of Holy Week? Does this feast mean something more to Christians than a recurring annual custom, a simple custom of providing palms to be placed behind your crucifix, beautiful as that custom may be?

Jesus certainly would have known what lay ahead for him as he entered Jerusalem. We have been reading about these steps leading up to this morning all this past week in the daily cycle of readings. With the benefit of historical perspective, we too know the outcome. Still, it is painful, for Easter Sunday must be preceded by Good Friday.

In a very particular way, Palm Sunday reminds each of us that the Way of the Cross cannot be traveled without great pain and suffering. As much as we may wish to avoid this road, the fact is that as Christians, we are called to follow it and to even embrace it as part of the price of the name *Christian*. We simply do not call ourselves Christians without carefully understanding the implications of this name.

In a day and age where many people question the value of suffering, even as it remains a mystery even to the most devout Christian, nevertheless we must uphold the dignity of human life in the midst of suffering, in imitation of our Lord's example and his command.

May this Holy Week move each of us to a greater sense of the value of our own lives and those around us, for they find their ultimate meaning in the events of this week. Through the Sacred Passion, death and resurrection of Christ, we find the fundamental answer to the mysteries of life—love triumphs over sin and death.

Each Friday at 3:00 pm, the hour of Divine Mercy, members of the Divine Mercy Cenacle chant in song the Chaplet of Divine Mercy in the Cana Chapel. It has come to be a time I cherish and try whenever possible to schedule in my calendar. The mantra repeats itself with every single bead on the rosary:

“For the sake of his sorrowful passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.”

First revealed by means of an interior voice, spoke these words: “Eternal Father, I offer You the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world; for the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us.”¹

The next day, as she was entering the chapel, she again heard this interior voice, instructing her how to recite the prayer that our Lord later called “the Chaplet.” This time, after “have mercy on us” were added the words “and on the whole world.”²

Let us pray for the courage to accompany the Lord on that long path this week. Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now; but you shall follow afterward.” Lord, help our hearts to be ready whenever you call.

¹ Diary, Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska, para. #475 Divine Mercy in My Soul (c) 1987 Congregation of Marians of the Immaculate Conception, Stockbridge, MA 01263.

² Ibid, paragraph #476