

Homily – Palm Sunday A

The Church celebrates this sixth Sunday of Lent as both Palm Sunday and Passion Sunday. This is the time of year we stop to remember and relive the events which brought about our redemption and salvation. What we commemorate and relive during this week is not just Jesus' dying and rising, but our own dying and rising in him, which will result in our healing, reconciliation, and redemption. The liturgy combines contrasting moments, one of glory, the other of suffering: the royal welcome of Jesus in Jerusalem and the drama of the trial, culminating in crucifixion, death and burial for the Christ.

The first reading, the third of Isaiah's four Servant Songs, like the other three, foreshadows Jesus' own life and mission. The Refrain for the Responsorial Psalm, "My God, My God, why have You abandoned Me?" plunges us into the heart of Christ's Passion, The Second Reading, taken from Paul's letter to the Philippians, is an ancient Christian hymn representing a very early Christian understanding of who Jesus is, and of how his mission saves us from sin and death.

The first part of the Gospel reading describes the royal reception Jesus received from his admirers, who paraded with him for a distance of two miles: from the Mount of Olives to the city of Jerusalem. In the second part, we listen to/participate in a reading of the Passion of Christ according to Matthew. We are challenged to examine our own lives in the light of some of the characters in the Passion story – like Peter who denied Jesus, Judas who betrayed Jesus, Herod who ridiculed Jesus, Pilate who acted against his conscience as he condemned Jesus to death on the cross, and the leaders of the people who preserved their position by getting rid of Jesus.

Messages: We need to answer 5 questions:

- 1) Does Jesus weep over my sinful soul as he wept over Jerusalem at the beginning of his Palm Sunday procession?
- 2) Am I a barren fig tree? God expects me to produce fruits of holiness, purity, justice, humility, obedience, charity, and forgiveness. Do I? Or worse, do I continue to produce bitter fruits of impurity, injustice, pride, hatred, jealousy and selfishness?
- 3) Will Jesus need to cleanse my heart with his whip? Jesus cannot tolerate the desecration of the temple of the Holy Spirit in me by my addiction to uncharitable, unjust and impure thoughts words and deeds; neither does Jesus praise my business mentality or calculation of loss and gain in my relationship with God, my Heavenly Father.
- 4) Do I welcome Jesus into my heart? Am I ready to surrender my life to him during this Holy Week and welcome him into all areas of my life as my Lord and Savior? Let us remember that we are sinners who have crucified Jesus by our sins, and we are able to turn to Jesus again and ask for his mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It is through the Passion of Jesus we receive forgiveness, "through his wounds we are healed."
- 5) Are we like the humble donkey that carried Jesus, bringing Jesus' universal love, unconditional forgiveness and sacrificial service to our families, places of work and communities by the way we live our lives?