

Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday

March 28, 2021

Year B RCL

Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16; Philippians 2:5-11; Mark 15:1-47

“Truly this man was God’s Son!”

By: The Rev. Fr. Fabian Villalobos

The Liturgy of the Word for Palm Sunday is extremely accurate today in returning us to the fundamental nucleus of the faith and the foundation of all our Christian existence. In the passion narratives of the gospels, we hear and recreate the history of our salvation, and have the opportunity to witness from different perspectives the historical moment in which Jesus’ death on the cross confirms the unending invitation from God to be saved.

The Liturgy of the Palms with the entrance of Jesus to Jerusalem is the beginning of the Holy Week, the Major or Greater Week. We have the opportunity today to contemplate his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, not with the violence of arms, or economic or military power, but with the power of the cross and with the strength of love that becomes a gift.

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, the Holy City, the city of peace, and the city that killed the prophets (Mt. 23:37), takes place on a colt as the Gospel of Mark tells us. He is welcomed with joy by the simple and the humble that receive him with branches of palms and "Hosanna" which explains the liturgy of the blessing of the palms of Passion Sunday.

From his entrance into Jerusalem, the powerful at the time opposed him to the point to condemn him to death. This celebration is closely linked to Good Friday, when the theme of the Passion of Christ will be resumed and the central point is the wood of the cross where Jesus dies in obedience to the Father.

"Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" They shouted back, "Crucify him!"

The story of the gospels is always current, only in the cross of Christ does humanity find peace. Every time humanity is threatened in many parts of the world and in all situations of daily life where the oppressed, the weakest and the least protected continue carrying their crosses.

"Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified."

Passion Sunday is the image of our own contrast loving Jesus while condemning him again, praising him Hosanna, and crucifying Him with our own sinful actions.

In the passion from Mark's Gospel there are many insights to reflect. I invite you to observe the Roman Centurion that was facing and seeing Jesus' death. He is an employee of the Roman Empire who becomes a witness for us Christians,

"Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

This is the center of Mark's Gospel. Jesus is the Son of God; Jesus accepts and embraces death for us. In front of his cross, we are called to follow his steps, to receive his expression of love, and especially to accept him as the Son of God.

Our King, the Son of God emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, and showing us the greatest form of humility. Jesus is our model and inspiration of authentic love especially when we love others to the point of giving our life for them as he did.

"They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus."

As we continue our Christian life's journey, it is our responsibility to become Simon of Cyrene for others helping and supporting them. There are many who struggle in these days carrying their crosses or accepting their new painful reality, especially those who have experienced grief and death in these COVID times.

To them and to us, the message of liberation of the cross is always the same. In the example of Jesus, we need to submit to God with the understanding that it is in this very obedience we find the strength to overcome our own weakness. Amen.