

Palm Sunday 2015

Did you notice we had two Gospel readings today?... The 1st Gospel was at the very beginning of Mass just before our procession began. ...That Gospel told us about Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem a few days before He would spend His last day on earth....It described how as Jesus rode along the road, the people were cheering Him, ...hailing Him as King of the Jews. ...They were so excited to see Him that they laid palm branches in front of Him as He rode along...and they actually took their coats off and laid those in front of Him too...They were filled with the hope that Jesus was the king who would save them from the cruel Roman Empire...so they kept shouting, "Hosanna! Hossana. (which means "save us")...Hosanna in the highest!"

It's from this Gospel that **this Sunday** gets the name we most often call it, "Palm Sunday"...But the main Gospel for today is the Gospel we just heard: the Lord's Passion according to Mark. ...This is why the church officially calls today **Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion**...Today is the beginning of Holy Week; today is the first of the High Holy Days of our Christian faith..

In going from the 1st Gospel reading to the 2nd Gospel reading,...we saw a dramatic change in mood from GLORY to GLOOM... The adoring cheers of "Hosanna!... Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"...turned into shouts of "Crucify him! Crucify him!"...And the palm branches laid before Jesus honoring Him as King of the Jews,...turned into branches striking Him, and people spitting on Him and mocking Him." ...And some of the people who had cheered Him and praised Him as He marched to Jerusalem – once they realized He wasn't the warrior king they hoped Him to be – became part of the angry crowd that called for his death just a few days later....and then jeered at Him...taunted Him...and insulted Him as He hung on the cross.

What can we take away from these readings today? What message can we take from this sudden change in the hearts of the people?...Maybe the question we need to consider 1st is what, after all, is the purpose of these readings,...and of all of the readings we'll hear throughout this week?...Their purpose is to remind us that Christ, our Lord, our Savior, came for us. Whether riding on a donkey, or walking on dust-covered feet,...He came into the world, came into our lives to give us hope, ...He came to give us the promise of forgiveness...and He sealed that promise by going thru unspeakable suffering and an agonizing death.

And for this we should give him honor and praise....and we do....We come here and kneel before him, and sing "Hosanna in the highest...Hosanna in the highest!";... just as those crowds did as He passed them on the road.

But these readings also remind us WHY Jesus did what He did.....He did it **because we sin**...**Sin**...There's a word that has almost disappeared from our modern day vocabulary. ...Nowadays, people don't sin,...they just made a mistake...or they were just following the crowd...or they only did what's been done to them...Yet, St. Paul tells us in Rom 3:23 that "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." ...And Jesus taught in Mk 7 that the sinful things we do come from within, come from the depths of our hearts...

So, yes, Christ did what He did BECAUSE WE SIN!.....He did it because there are times when we are just like those people who turned on Him...One minute we praise him, and honor him, and worship him, and the next minute, ...by our actions and by our thoughts and by our words, we mock him and insult him,...we turn our back on Him,..push Him out of our life... we sin...

But that, after all, is why He came to do what He did. ...He loves us and forgives us just as He loved and forgave those people who had Him nailed to the cross... And that's why we don't just REMEMBER the Lord's Passion today and all through Holy Week...We CELEBRATE it! ...We praise Him and we thank Him for paying the price for our sins,...so that our sinfulness would not keep us from the joys of heaven.

So let's get Holy Week off to a great start right now by joining our hands and voices to say thank you Lord Jesus....Thank you Lord Jesus....Thank You Lord Jesus...(applaud) Thank You! ...Thank You!...

And let's raise our voices to praise Him...Hosanna in the highest...blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord ...Hosanna in the highest!

May this Holy Week be for each of you more than just another week;...May your heart come to fully understand that everything that happened this week over 2000 yrs ago was done for you, ...no matter who you are, ... where you come from,...no matter where you are in your faith... no matter what you've done. ...Jesus did it all for you!AMEN