

Palm Sunday 2016

The 1st Gospel reading we heard at the start of Mass described Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. a few days before He would meet His death....As He travelled along the road, the crowd was cheering Him, ...hailing Him as King of the Jews....laying their cloaks & palm branches in front of Him as He passed by...Filled with the hope that Jesus was the king who was going to free them from the cruel Roman empire...the people cried out, "Hosanna! (which means "save us")...Hosanna in the highest!"

Then the 2nd Gospel we just heard told quite a different story...There was a dramatic change in the people's attitude toward Jesus. The adoring crowd that had shouted "Hosanna! Hosanna!" just a few days earlier, had turned into an ugly mob calling for His death with shouts of "Crucify him! Crucify him!"... Many of the same people who had hailed Jesus & praised Him as He marched to Jerusalem became part of the angry crowd spitting at Him, ...taunting Him...and insulting Him as He hung on the cross.

What caused this sudden change in how those people in Jerusalem treated Jesus?...It was simply a case of unmet expectations...The people believed that He was the Messiah, the Son of David, the long-awaited Ruler of Israel...& they were right...What they expected, though, was that Jesus would come to Jerusalem, & by His mighty works, take the throne as king, & restore the nation of Israel. ...But, it wasn't going to be that way...Jesus did not come to sit on a throne and exert political power. The only throne He would know on earth was the cross...& from that throne He would unleash a power greater than any military power wielded by any earthly king – the power of LOVE & MERCY... In a supreme act of love & mercy, He willingly suffered & died for the sins of the world, to open the gates of heaven to undeserving, repentant sinners...

And that's why we don't just REMEMBER the Lord's Passion today & all through Holy Week. ...We CELEBRATE it!...We praise Him and we thank Him for paying the price so that our sinfulness would not condemn us to an eternity separated from God.....So let's get Holy Week off to a great start right now by putting our hands & voices together to thank Him: Thank U, Lord Jesus....Thank U, Lord Jesus...T U! ...T U!...

Words of thanks are good,...but our merciful savior deserves more than our words. ...Jesus came into a sinful world that was in desperate need of compassion & mercy...It still is...Pope Francis – in this Year of Mercy - exhorts us to respond to our savior’s compassionate mercy for people in need, by becoming merciful with Him... & like Him....& because of Him...

How can I be merciful like Jesus?...First off, I have to be patient with – you know – those unique people...In other words, be helpful even to oddballs...We all come in contact with people who are peculiar, different.... Mercy requires me to treat them the same as anyone else...The same goes for those who are offensive or obnoxious ...Mercy calls me to understand that a lot of people who are hard to take, are often in a lot of pain...hurting inside...St. Paul in Rom 15 tells us to, “accept one another as Christ has accepted you.”...Merciful people are accepting people.

If I am merciful, I’ll forgive those who have fallen. And that doesn’t just apply to those who have hurt me, but also to those who have made choices that I just cannot understand. We are all vulnerable to temptation...So Mercy compels me to resist pointing a finger,...& to instead offer a helping hand.

If I’m a merciful person, I’ll help those who are in need. Prov. 3:27 says: "Do not withhold good from those who need it, when it is in your power to act."...Mercy is love in action.

When all we do is feel sorry for someone, even though we have the power to help them, we are not being like Christ....1 Jn 3 says: "Suppose a person who had enough to live on sees another person in need. How can God’s love be in that person if he doesn’t bother to help?...We must show love thru actions, not thru empty words."... When someone is in need,...whether it’s a material need or emotional or spiritual, ...mercy requires us to get involved!...

So, during this Holy Week,...let’s show our gratitude for the saving mercies that flow down to us from the cross...by making a commitment to follow Jesus’ example by obeying His command:

“be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful to you.”...+.AMEN

