

Palm Sunday



This is the sixth and last Sunday of Lent. It also begins the most solemn of all weeks of the entire liturgical year.

Today we have two gospels, each with a distinct “feeling” – the purpose of the first gospel and the procession is to ready us in a most profound way to hear the Proclamation of the Passion, and to celebrate well the Triduum.

The procession of the palms is a way to engage our whole selves – involving actual bodily movement from one place to another. The journey can symbolize the paschal journey of our whole lives in Christ, ranging from our “Hosanna” experiences to those of “crucifixion”! Not an easy thought, however real!

This week we are invited to see our lives as a continuation of the procession with palms, joining ourselves with Jesus on his journey to Jerusalem and to death. Rather than a sombre, morbid week, we live in anticipation of embracing our Cross – so that we might experience new life at Easter. Knowing that the journey this week (and that of our whole lives) involves the Cross, we commit ourselves to be especially aware of those around us in need.

As we listen to the Passion story we might ask ourselves:

- In what ways do our attitudes conform to those of the Suffering Servant and of Christ?
- Does our humanity, weakness and vulnerability lead us to a reliance on God?
- Does God’s Word inform our speech and actions? Are we sufficiently empty of self that we can be filled with God’s love and grace in the events of our lives – especially in the trying times?
- Do we really believe that we will be raised with Christ and enter into glory with Him?

Mark’s account of the Passion emphasises Jesus’ abandonment by his friends and his aloneness. If Peter and the others could abandon Jesus in his hour of need, so can we. Today abandonment occurs when we ignore the needy and poor of the world. Denial happens every time we withhold love or support. Commitment lags when we refuse to stand on the side of justice.

Jesus prays to God - even though he feels abandoned by God and by his friends. Can we believe that God is with us - even when we do not experience God’s presence, when things turn out differently than we had hoped or expected? Can we expand our hearts and be open to the deeper meaning and hope in our lives in those times? Can we try to live as creatively as possible and be open to the power of possibility that exists for us in resurrection?

The “Suffering Servant” is glorious precisely by “hanging in there” – by refusing to indulge in self-pity, as he “sets his face like flint”. A tall order sometimes, but worth wondering about it!

Finally, only some faithful women watch from a distance to see the final outcome for Jesus. The faithful women were the ones who came to know eventually that through his death comes the rising and the glorification. An encouraging thought for all of us!

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