

March 28, 2021

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

Is 50:4-7

Ps 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24

Phil 2:6-11

Mk 14:1—15:47

FOCUS ON THE CROSS

We are now entering the **Holy Week** with our celebration of **Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord**. This celebration prepares us to the peak/culmination of the self-giving sacrifice of our Lord Jesus on the Cross this coming **Good Friday**.

There are lots of points to reflect/meditate on based on the readings and the gospel proclaimed. However, I would like to invite you all to reflect/meditate on the **Cross**. Let me share with you a story to help you in your reflection this **Holy Week**.

The Bishop of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris during the early part of the last 20th century was a great evangelizer who tried to reach out to unbelievers, scoffers, and cynics. He liked to tell the story of a young man who would stand outside the cathedral and shout derogatory slogans at the people entering to worship. He would call them fools and other insulting names. The people tried to ignore him, but it was difficult.

One day the parish priest went outside to confront the young man, much to the distress of the parishioners. The young man ranted and raved against everything the priest told him. Finally, the priest addressed the young scoffer, saying, **“Look, let’s get this over with once and for all. I’m going to dare you to do something, and I bet you can’t do it.”** And of course, the young man shot back, **“I can do anything you propose, you white-robed wimp!”** **“Fine,”** said the priest. **“All I ask you to do is to come into the sanctuary with me. I want you to stare at the figure of Christ on His cross, and I want you to scream at the very top of your lungs, as loudly as you can. ‘Christ died on the Cross for me, and I don’t care one bit.’”**

So, the young man went into the sanctuary, and looking at the figure, screamed as loudly as he could, **“Christ died on the Cross for me, and I don’t care one bit.”** The priest said, **“Very good. Now do it again.”** And again, the young man screamed, with a little more hesitancy, **“Christ died on the Cross for me, and I don’t care one bit.”** **“You’re almost done now,”** said the priest. **“One more time.”** The young man raised his fist, kept looking at the crucifix, but the words wouldn’t come. He just could not look at the face of Christ and say those words anymore. The real punch line came when, after he told the story, the Bishop said, **“I was that young man. That young man, that defiant young man was I. I thought I didn’t need God but found out that I did.”**

The **Holy Week** highlights the **Cross**. It is a very important symbol of our faith. It speaks volume about God's love for us, his people. **Have you stared at the Cross lately and allowed Jesus to speak to you? If you did stare at the Cross, what message from Jesus did you get? Did your love for him grow stronger and deeper? Did you allow him to change you like the young man who later became a Bishop?**

We see the Cross all the time. We have it here in Church. Some of us have it in our cars. Others have it tattooed on their bodies. Some have it hang at the doorpost of their homes. We see it all the time that the temptation is not to really pay attention to it. We see it but we are so busy to reflect/meditate on the beautiful message it wants to convey. Thus, the Cross, most of the time, becomes a decoration rather than an instrument to deepen our faith-relationship with Jesus. I hope and pray that our treatment of the **Cross** will be different this year as we enter **Holy Week**.

Spend time looking at the Cross and you will see what St. Paul is telling us in the 2nd reading.

- The **Cross** will tell you how 'he emptied himself' for you.
- The **Cross** will convey to you a humble God who chose to serve you.
- The **Cross** will impart to you the importance of obedience in doing the Father's will.

Spend time looking at the Cross and you will see what the Gospel wants to communicate.

- The **Cross** will disclose to you about the betrayal and yet forgiveness is what being offered.
- The **Cross** will declare to you suffering that leads to salvation.
- The **Cross** will proclaim God's unconditional love for you.
- The **Cross** will express to you the courage to surrender oneself to God amid persecution or rejection.
- The **Cross** will tell you that you are not alone in your struggles. He suffers with you with love.

As we spend time looking at the **Cross** this **Holy Week**, may we, through his grace, come out to be more **compassionate** in dealing with each other; **reaching out** in love for the neglected; **obedient** in doing his will; **simplicity** of life; and **self-giving sacrifice** in carrying out the mission of the Church.

- **Compassion**
- **Reach out**
- **Obedience**
- **Simplicity of life**
- **Self-giving sacrifice**

God bless our Holy Week!