

Readings for April 14, 2019 -- Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

Passive Waiting

We have been on a journey this Lent. Now we move toward completion, accompanying Jesus as he chooses to fulfill his mission -- to go to Jerusalem to do his Father's work. As Jesus is "handed over" he is no longer the active leader, preacher, doer. He allows it, the Father allows it, but it is the painful mystery of being passive, of waiting. We wait, too, uniting our own moments of suffering and dying with his, knowing that even in the midst of suffering, we are in touch with Resurrection.

Note: *If groups wish to reflect on the Mass Gospel (The Passion of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, According to Luke), please read the account from your own Bibles (Luke 22: 39-53).*

Opening Prayer: Litany Prayer for Palm Sunday:

Response: *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.*

As Christ entered Jerusalem he was greeted as King and Messiah,
Let us adore him, and joyfully praise him:

All: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna to you, Son of David, King of the ages,
Hosanna to you, victor over death and the powers of darkness.

(Response)

You went up to Jerusalem to suffer and so enter into your glory,
lead your Church into the paschal feast of heaven.

(Response)

You made your cross the tree of life,
give its fruit to those reborn in baptism.

(Response)

Savior of mankind, you came to save sinners,
bring into your kingdom all who have faith, hope, and love.

(Response)

Gospel for the Procession With Palms – Gospel LK 19:28-40

Jesus proceeded on his journey up to Jerusalem. As he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples.

He said, "Go into the village opposite you, and as you enter it you will find a colt tethered on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here.

And if anyone should ask you, 'Why are you untying it?' you will answer, 'The Master has need of it.'" So those who had been sent went off and found everything just as he had told them.

And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying this colt?" They answered, "The Master has need of it." So they brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks over the colt, and helped Jesus to mount.

As he rode along, the people were spreading their cloaks on the road; and now as he was approaching the slope of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of his disciples began to praise God aloud with joy for all the mighty deeds they had seen. They proclaimed:

"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest."

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples."

He said in reply, "I tell you, if they keep silent, the stones will cry out!"

Mass – Reading I IS 50:4-7

The Lord GOD has given me a well-trained tongue,

that I might know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them.

Morning after morning he opens my ear that I may hear; and I have not rebelled, have not turned back.

I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard;

my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting.

The Lord GOD is my help, therefore I am not disgraced;

I have set my face like flint, knowing that I shall not be put to shame.

Responsorial Psalm PS 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24.

R. (2a) **My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?**

All who see me scoff at me;

they mock me with parted lips, they wag their heads:

"He relied on the LORD; let him deliver him,

let him rescue him, if he loves him."

R. **My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?**

Indeed, many dogs surround me,

a pack of evildoers closes in upon me;

They have pierced my hands and my feet; I can count all my bones.

R. **My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?**

They divide my garments among them,

and for my vesture they cast lots.

But you, O LORD, be not far from me; O my help, hasten to aid me.

R. My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

I will proclaim your name to my brethren;
in the midst of the assembly I will praise you:

"You who fear the LORD, praise him;
all you descendants of Jacob, give glory to him;
revere him, all you descendants of Israel!"

R. My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

Reading 2 PHIL 2:6-11

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Related Reflections

Why do we call Jesus's suffering just before his death his passion? Generally, this is not properly understood. We tend to think that passion here refers to intense sufferings, as in "passionate suffering." This is not wrong, but it misses a key point. Passion comes from the Latin *passio* meaning passiveness, non-activity, absorbing something more than actively doing anything.

The "passion" of Jesus refers to that time in his life where his meaning for us is not defined by what he was doing but rather by what was being done to him. What is being said here? The public life and ministry of Jesus can be divided into two distinct parts: Scholars estimate that Jesus spent about three years preaching and teaching before being put to death. For most of that time—in fact, for all of it except the last day—he was very much the doer: in command, the active one, teaching, healing, performing miracles, giving counsel, eating with sinners, debating with church authorities, and generally, by activities of every sort, inviting his contemporaries into the life of God. And he was busy. He is described at times as being so pressured by people that he didn't even have time to eat. For almost all of his public life Jesus was actively doing something.

However, from the moment he walks out of the Last Supper room and begins to pray in Gethsemane, all that activity stops. He is no longer the one who is doing things for others, but the one who is having things done to him. In the garden, they arrest him, bind his hands, lead him to the high priest, and then take him to Pilate. He is beaten, humiliated, stripped of his clothes, and eventually nailed to a cross where he dies. This constitutes his "passion," that time in his life and ministry where he ceases to be the doer and becomes the one who has things done to him.

What is so remarkable about this is that our faith teaches us that we are saved more through Jesus's passion (his death and suffering) than through all of his activity of preaching and doing miracles. How does this work?

Allow me an illustration: Ten years ago, my sister, Helen, an Ursuline nun, died of cancer. A nun for more than thirty years, she much loved her vocation and was much loved within it. For most of those thirty years, she served as a den mother to hundreds of young women who attended an academy run by her order. Through all those years she was the active one, the consummate doer, the one that others expected to take charge. She relished the role. She loved doing things for others.

Then cancer struck her brutally, and she spent the last months of her life bedridden. Now things needed to be done for her and to her. Doctors, nurses, her sisters in community, and others took turns taking care of her. And, like Jesus from the time of his arrest until the moment of his death, her body too was humiliated, led around by others, stripped, prodded, and stared at by curious passersby. Indeed, like Jesus, she died thirsty, with a sponge held to her lips by someone else.

This was her passion. She, the one who had spent so many years doing things for others, now had to submit to having things done to her. But—and this is the point—like Jesus, she was able in that period of her life, when she was helpless and no longer in charge, to give life and meaning to others in a deeper way than she could when she was active and doing so many things for others.

The cross teaches us that we, like Jesus, give as much to others in our passivities as in our activities. When we are no longer in charge, when we are beaten down by whatever—humiliated, suffering, and unable even to make ourselves understood by our loved ones—then we are undergoing our own passion and, like Jesus in his passion, have in that the opportunity to give our love and ourselves to others in a very deep way. – Fr. Ron Rolheiser (from www.franciscanmedia.org)

The Paschal Mystery in Everyday Life:

We are a part of nature. Not only do we experience the seasons and see the process of dying and rising, we also have our own dyings and risings. Sometimes these are obvious—for example, a grandparent dies or a baby is born. But other dyings and risings are less obvious. An experience of dying might be when you have an argument with a friend that leaves you feeling upset, or you see a homeless mother and child and don't know what to do to help.

An experience of rising might be reconciling with someone you hurt or who hurt you, talking with your family about the homeless mother and child and discovering that an organization like the St. Vincent de Paul Society has the people and the resources to care for people who are homeless. These are some of the dyings and risings that we experience every day.

Now when we look at the Paschal Mystery in the context of our religious beliefs and the life of Jesus Christ, we come to a deeper meaning of dying and rising. Jesus Christ's passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension are the ultimate event of dying and rising, of death and new life. We learn from Jesus that new life can come from death, that we can find meaning in tough times, that there really is light in the darkness. We learn that all life has this rhythm of dying and rising and that God is with us in good times and in bad. Christ's experience of suffering, death, and new life has forever changed us and given us a different way of living. Death no longer has the last word. Plus, when we encounter tough times, we have the comfort of knowing that God has "been there, done that" and the power of hope that new life will come from death. Becoming conscious of our own dyings and risings helps us have a greater sense of compassion for others and a greater willingness to reach out.

Think about your own life. What is a dying or rising that you have experienced today, this week, this year? Reflect on that experience in light of the event of Jesus Christ's passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension.
(from Loyolapress.com)

Meditation and reflection:

Look over the questions you answered during your first SCC session about your hopes for Lent. How did it go this Lent? Did you see your extra time with Jesus bearing good fruit? In what ways? What came up for you that you might like to bring to Jesus at the foot of the Cross during this coming Holy Week?

Discussion Questions

- What can I learn from being more passive, letting things happen without always trying to be in control?
- Does this make me uncomfortable, or afraid? Do I want to become more balanced in letting go?
- When I do let go of power or control, what am I holding to as the greater value in my life?
- In what ways can I unite the paschal mystery moments in my own life (the times of dying and rising) with Jesus' Paschal Mystery?

Closing Prayers:

Loving God, I am just beginning to realize how much you love me.
Your son, Jesus was humble and obedient.
He fulfilled your will for him by becoming human and suffering with us.
I ask you for the desire to become more humble
so that my own life might also bear witness to you.
I want to use the small sufferings I have in this world to give you glory.
Please, Lord, guide my mind with your truth.
Strengthen my life by the example of Jesus.
Help me to be with Jesus in this week as he demonstrates again his total love for me.
He died so that I would no longer be separated from you.
Help me to feel how close you are and to live in union with you. *(Creighton Online Ministries)*

Anima Christi

Soul of Christ, sanctify me;
Body of Christ, save me;
Blood of Christ, inebriate me;

Passion of Christ, strengthen me;
O good Jesus, hear me! Within thy sacred wounds, hide me;
Permit me not to be separated from Thee
From the malignant foe, defend me;
In the hour of my death, call me, And bid me come to Thee
That with the saints I may praise Thee for ever and ever. Amen.

For reflection at home this week:

Spend time with these gospel accounts and place yourself in the scene. Tell yourself: "I see Jesus on the Cross. I speak with him as a friend and I tell him the things that are in my heart."

Suggested Music:

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence (Sarah Kroger)

Lead Me to the Cross (Hillsong United)

What Wondrous Love is This (Josh Garrels)

Anima Christi (Stellenbosch University Choir)

Ave Verum Corpus (Mozart)

*Ave, verum corpus
natum de Maria Virgine,
Vere passum immolatum
in Cruce pro homine,
Cujus latus perforatum
unda fluxit et sanguine,
Esto nobis praegustatum
in mortis examine.*

*on the Cross for man,
Whose pierced side overflowed
with water and blood,
Be for us a foretaste
In the test of death.*

*Hail, true body
born of the Virgin Mary,
Who truly suffered, sacrificed*