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Passion Sunday - 10 April 2022

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10 April 2022

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

Reflection by Joe Tedesco

Introduction

Today we begin Holy Week with a two-part liturgical movement. The first focusses on Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem where we proclaim, 'blessing to the king'. The second part features an extended reading of the Passion of the Lord where we come to see what sort of king Jesus actually is; one who lays down his life for all humanity.

Procession Reading

Luke 19:28-40

Jesus enters Jerusalem in the manner predicted by the prophet Zechariah; a king triumphant and victorious, yet humbly riding on a colt.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you are the face of divine compassion.
Lord, have mercy.

You died for the sake of the whole world.
Christ, have mercy.

You rose to bring to life the new creation.
Lord, have mercy.

Collect

The oration

Almighty ever-living God,
who as an example of humility for the human race to follow
caused our Saviour to take flesh and submit to the Cross,
graciously grant that we may heed his lesson of patient suffering
and so merit a share in his Resurrection.

Commentary

This Sunday signals an intensification of the Lenten journey. It celebrates the entry of the Lord into Jerusalem and heralds the upcoming Passion. It operates as the

climactic Sunday of Lent and as the introduction to Holy Week. In this, the collect is extremely interesting. It establishes the paschal mystery as a unified whole: the incarnation, the death and the resurrection are one of a piece. There is no atomisation of the singular mystery of salvation. The incarnation and the cross are intertwined as the ultimate exemplars of the self-emptying of Christ under the will of God. The presupposition is that the way to resurrection is to follow the will of God, the God who holds all power and does not fall under the sway of death. The response of the Saviour to the divine will is patient suffering. Similarly patient suffering is recommended as our response too, especially as the seasonal fast increases in intensity. Further the self-abasement of Christ is an example of humility for all humanity. However, suffering and humility are not the endpoint of the prayer, rather the aim of the whole is participation in the resurrection.

First Reading

Isaiah 50:4-7

Isaiah provides an image of the 'Suffering Servant'; one who does not shy away from trials that come with doing the will of God.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 22(21):8-9, 17-20, 23-24

My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? (v. 2)

The famous Psalm that calls out to God from a sense of unjust abandonment. In Mark's Gospel these words appear on Jesus' lips as he endures the cross.

Second Reading

Philippians 2:6-11

The essence of Jesus' life and mission is captured in this proclamation of the early Christian community. Even though Christ was one with God, Christ emptied himself of this equality to be completely like us.

Gospel Reading

Luke 22:14-23:56 or Luke 23:1-49

Luke's account of the Passion of the Lord includes some distinct features. One is that in Luke's account, Jesus goes to his death with others around him including Simon of Cyrene, the thieves on either side of Jesus on the cross, and many who had followed from Galilee who stood at a distance and watched. We join with them in contemplating and responding to the profound events captured in the Passion narrative.

Reflection

Today's liturgical celebration has two parts. The opening part focussing on Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem which features the palms, and the second which features an extended reading of the Passion of the Lord. Though they might be seen as separate, they are very interconnected elements and speak to each other.

The first connection between the two parts is the well stated understanding that a crowd that worships Jesus as coming in God's name at one point is quick to turn against him soon after. This illustration of the fickleness of human nature does bear reflection. It is a warning to us that simply proclaiming outwardly something that does not match penetrating conviction will be found out.

But there is more to draw on here too. As we hold on to our palms and take them home with us, they remind us as to what we hope Jesus to be, how we hope God operates as a saving victor that brings all we need, a 'king' who commands the world we live in. Yet, as we follow Jesus' story, we see that this king does not simply manipulate existence to match expectation, whether that be mine, yours, or any number of people through the ages. Jesus is about one thing, doing the will of the Father. In the many scenes found in the Passion is the Agony in the Garden (found in the longer version of the Gospel). There we see the iconic moment where Jesus asks God the Father that "this cup be taken away", but immediately surrenders his will to the Father's; "let your will be done, not mine" (Lk 22:42). This is not only a profound Christological moment but is also part of the call for Jesus' followers to take up their cross and follow. Earlier in Luke's gospel Jesus makes the point that:

If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. (Luke 9:23-24)

There are many ways we are called to follow Jesus' example and 'lay down our lives'. When we acknowledge the Passion of the Lord, we also acknowledge those great men and women who walk with Jesus in something of a more literal sense. Fortunately, most of us are not called to such sacrificial situations. However, we are all called to follow. To not seek our own will that is the easier way out, but God's.

It is easy to proclaim God's glory when God's activity is clear and matches our expectation. There are a multitude of followers that praise God "for all the mighty works they had seen" (Lk 19:37) in the Palm Sunday procession reading. As we follow the Passion, those followers disappear. Famously even Jesus' closest followers, the Twelve and Peter most prominently among them, struggle with Jesus' movements on the way to the cross. The unfathomable is happening and they, quite understandably, are struggling to make sense of it. God is no longer obviously matching their expectation.

There is a scene in today's Gospel reading that is unique to Luke and speaks to this sentiment. When Jesus is sent off by Pilate to Herod to be dealt with, Herod is said to be delighted to see Jesus. Herod does not immediately want to join in the condemnation coming from those who had arrested Jesus. Rather, Herod is excited

and eagerly wants to meet Jesus. This is so because Herod himself has heard of Jesus' greatness and wanted to see for himself some "great miracle" (23:8). When Herod questions Jesus, Jesus remains silent. There is no sign or great miracle given. Jesus is not an entertainer, a performer of magic on demand. Jesus is about the will of God. The will of God here is silence.

Herod's excitement is dashed, and he soon joins with his guards in treating Jesus with contempt and mocking him. Later, while on the cross, a similar theme is seen. As crowds stand by watching, leaders mock Jesus, "he saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!" (23:35). If you are God, then act how I think God should act. Please me and my sensibilities. Do what I want you to do. Act in keeping with how I think God should act. From Peter to Herod, from the crowd of excited disciples to those gathered at the foot of the cross. All in their own way fall to the same fault; not your will be done God, but mine.

As we hold our palms, we proclaim a God who does great works, but also a God who enters the darkness of human sin, who seems silent in the face of injustice and despair. When it is hardest of all to see how God is working, we are then called to follow on a deeper and lasting level; not my will God, but yours be done. Not my way of understanding God, but yours. Not faith in how I think faith should work, but faith in you God. This is one of many prayers that come forth in this holiest of weeks.

There is one final note to make here. If the story of the Passion is anything to go by, we all will fail to surrender our will to God's at some point and in some way. This is the reason why God has entered into our reality, to meet us as we are. The great prayer of the Second Reading taken from Philippians reminds us of what is going on here. It is a foundational guide to our faith. God does not hold God's self over and against us. God, in the person of Jesus, empties God's self and enters into humanity, to the point of death on a cross. Not to remain there and wallow with us in our failing, but to rise up and draw broken humanity to God's very being. That does not necessarily make the difficult and silent times any easier. It does, however, provide us with a vision, a hope, a way we can navigate what seems unnavigable. Thus, in the good times and the bad, what whatever faith we have, we place in our Lord God.

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

Father, we come to you with the needs of our community. As we heard in the Psalm, we know that you will not abandon us and we will sing of your glory.

Petitions

We pray for Pope Francis that he continues to lead the People of God in truth and love, guided by the Holy Spirit, into the Synod in 2023. May he remain healthy and strong to fulfil his goals for the Church.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the members of the Plenary Council and the committees that support them as we journey towards the second Assembly in July. May all the information that has been collected from the People of God faithfully inform the decisions about the future of our Church in Australia.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of nations during this time of climate change and the pandemic. May they be inspired by the Spirit to implement equitable and just policies that meet the needs of the poor and those living on the fringes of society.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who are persecuted for their Christian faith that they be strengthened in their belief in Christ who is the triumphant King.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for our parish community that the works of charity, self-sacrifice and prayerfulness continue so that our relationship with God in faith grows.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who have neglected their faith that they may find the strength to come back through the prayers and active compassion of our Church.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who are suffering with mental illness because of the pandemic. May they be strengthened through the care and love of those around them.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

Father, we thank you for your great love and know that our needs are heard as we pray through the Spirit and in the name of Christ our King

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA

Entrance Antiphon:

Hosanna to the Son of David. P Jones/E Rayson. 311

Hosanna to the Son of David. J Wood. 312

Entrance Procession:

All, glory, praise and honour. J M Neale/ J S Bach. 309

Hail, Redeemer, King divine! P Brennan/ W Flood. 390

Other Hymns for the Liturgy:

Behold the wood. D Schutte. 333

O sacred head, surrounded. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux/ J S Bach. 335

When the Son of God was dying. J Bell. 510

Were you there? African American Spiritual. 336

AOV1

Blessings on the king. M Lynch. 104

Behold the cross. B Hurd. 105

Were you there? African American Spiritual. 103

AOV2

See his hands. S Sears. 48

AOV4Kids

Sing it! Hosanna. M Mangan. 73

CWB

Entrance Procession

All glory, praise and honour. Theodulph of Orleans. 229

Hail, redeemer, king divine. Patrick Brennan CSsR. 703

Other hymns for the Liturgy

My loving Saviour, how have you offended. Johann Heermann. 749

O sacred head, surrounded. St Bernard of Clairvaux. 776

When I survey the wondrous cross. Isaac Watts. 862

CWBII

Entrance Antiphon

Hosanna to the Son of David. ICEL. 302

Entrance Procession

All glory, laud and honour. Theodulph of Orleans, tr. John Mason Neale. 303

Hail, redeemer, king divine! Patrick Brennan CSsR. 400

Other hymns for the Liturgy

Tree of life. Marty Haugen. 300

Were you there when they crucified my Lord? African-American Spiritual. 328

When I survey the wondrous cross. Isaac Watts. 329

O sacred head, surrounded. Attr. St Bernard of Clairvaux, tr. Henry Williams Baker and Arthur Tozer Russell. 330
Jesus, remember me. Taizé Community. 526

S&S1

Behold the Cross. Bob Hurd. 172
My God, My God. Timothy R. Smith. 58

S&S2

My God, My God. Janèt Sullivan Whitaker. 249
O sacred head. Bernard of Clairvaux/Bob Hurd. 314
Wondrous love. Timothy R. Smith. 317

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 21: *My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?*
Psalm 21: Kathleen Boschetti MSC. CWB 233
Psalm 22: My God, My God. Christopher Willcock. GA 22
Psalm 22 (21): Jenny O'Brien. JOBC pg. 36
My God, My God: Paul Mason. PM pg. 10
My God, My God: Paul Mason. PM pg. 14
My God, my God: Marty Haugen. LPC pg. 48

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Sing it, hosanna (TT/SYJ) [CHILDREN: Procession with Palms]
Where have you gone? (FWS) *Based on Ps 21/22*
Hearts on fire (Vs 2 & 3) (SHOF) [Recessional]

