

Palm Sunday Or Passion Sunday (C)

The Church celebrates today as both Palm Sunday and Passion Sunday. Today's liturgy combines contrasting moments of glory ("Hosanna") and suffering ("Crucify him") – the royal welcome given to Jesus by his followers and the drama of his unjust trial culminating in his crucifixion. Holy Week challenges us to remember and relive the events which brought about our redemption and salvation, to appreciate gratefully the price Jesus paid for our salvation, and to return God's love for us (expressed through the suffering and death of Jesus), by loving others. The meditation on these Paschal mysteries should enable us to do our own dying to sin and rising with Jesus, which will result in our healing, reconciliation, and redemption. Proper participation in the Holy Week liturgy will also deepen our relationship with God, increase our Faith, and strengthen our lives as disciples of Jesus.

After King David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and arranged to have her husband Uriah killed, God sent Nathan the prophet to convict

David of his sins. Nathan told the story of a rich man who, although he had many flocks and herds, decided to steal and kill the ewe lamb of his poor neighbor to eat with a guest (cf. 2Sam 12:1ff). This outraged David and got him to exclaim, “As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die.” Then Nathan shocked David by saying, “You are that man!”

During our listening to the Passion of the Lord, we might be tempted to become outraged against Judas, Pilate, Peter, Herod, the soldiers and so many others. But God through the Church gives us this story and then tells us, as Nathan told David, “You are that man!” You are Judas! You are Pilate! You are Peter! There have been great debates through the centuries about who ultimately was responsible for the death of the Lord. Some said the Jews. Some said the Romans. Some said both. But the Second Vatican Council, clearly basing herself on the traditional understanding from St. Paul’s letters and the earliest teachings of the Church, said that — even though clearly the sinful deeds of the Jewish

leaders and Roman authorities played a part — ALL OF US killed Jesus by our sins. Jesus died for our sins. We also encounter Mary Magdalen, the Blessed Mother, Simon of Cyrene, the Roman Centurion, St. John and the others, and the Church says to us, again, “You are that man!” We are Mary Magdalene, reconciled sinners who remain faithful to the Lord to the end. We are Simon of Cyrene, helping the Lord — albeit perhaps reluctant at first — to carry the Cross. We are St. John, receiving Mary as our inheritance. We are the Centurion proclaiming Jesus to be the Son of God. During these days we are called to contemplate their faces as well and see in them the reflection of our own.

Do I welcome Jesus into my heart? Am I ready to surrender my life to Him during this Holy Week and welcome Him into all areas of my life as my Lord and Savior, singing “Hosanna”? Today, we receive palm branches at the Divine Liturgy. Let us take them to our homes and put them some place where we can always see them. Let the palms remind us that Christ is the King of our families, that Christ is the King of our

hearts and that Christ is the only true answer to our quest for happiness and meaning in our lives. And if we do proclaim Christ as our King, let us try to make time for Him in our daily life; let us be reminded that He is the One with Whom we will be spending eternity. Let us be reminded further that our careers, our education, our finances, our homes, all of the basic material needs in our lives are only temporary. Let us prioritize and place Christ the King as the primary concern in our lives. It is only when we have done this that we will find true peace and happiness in our confused and complex world.