

Homily for Palm Sunday, A, April 5, 2020

Now that we are required to stay home, we will miss the community celebration of the great events of Holy Week in our parishes: Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter. I strongly recommend that each of us read the Liturgy of the Word for each of these days. You can do so by googling www.USCCB.org. This is the site of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. It is a very useful site for Catholic information. When you open it, you will find a calendar on the opening page which you can open by clicking on the day and get the scripture readings for that day.

Let me begin this brief reflection:

Imagine you are in Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday. You see a crowd coming holding palm branches and shouting Hosanna to a man riding humbly on a donkey (not a war horse). Would you not ask yourself: **“Who is this?”** This question is answered in several ways in today’s mass.

In the opening prayer we read: *“Ever-living God, who as an example of humility for the human race to follow, caused our Savior to take flesh and submit to the Cross, graciously grant that we may heed his lesson of patient suffering and so merit in his Resurrection....”* Jesus is an example for us to follow as we live our lives.

To sum up the words of **Isaiah** in the first reading : Jesus takes on the form of the Suffering Servant who speaks to the weary and is Himself wearied by those who *“beat His back and plucked His beard.”*

St. Paul speaking to the Philippians says: *“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 ... became obedient to the point of death. Even death on a cross. Because of this God exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name ..." Jesus is the Suffering Servant who died for us.

The Passion account of St. Matthew's Gospel begins with Jesus's words to his followers: *"one of you will betray me..."* then follows with the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper, his arrest and his appearance before the high priest where Jesus declares He is the Christ *... and from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."* And then continues with his trial before Pilate, the condemnation to His death, the Crucifixion and ends with the Centurion at the foot of the Cross declaring: *"Jesus truly is the Son of God."*

After reading all the scriptures for this Sunday, please spend some time thanking Jesus for the gift of his saving love. Reflect on who Jesus, the Christ is and what does His suffering, death and Resurrection mean to you.