

## **Homily- Palm Sunday      The Passion of Jesus according to Saint Mark**

- Working from home this past year I have become keenly aware of how dependent I have become on my laptop computer and my cell phone to keep me connected to the world. And one of my major concerns with these items is remembering to recharge the battery.
- There have been several evenings where I have fallen asleep before performing the nightly ritual of finding the charger and plugging everything into the wall outlet for that overnight re-charge.
- If you have experienced writing that long email only to have your laptop screen go dark before you hit the send button or if you are on an important phone call and see the low battery message on the screen, then you know that frantic feeling. That fear of running out of energy before you are done with the task at hand. I have even heard this fear referred to as “last bar anxiety” (referring to those tiny little bars that indicate how much battery power is left).
- Thinking about these things it occurs to me: shouldn't we have similar concerns about our spiritual life, our spiritual batteries.
- Do we remember to “plug in” and charge our spiritual batteries. As we travel through this life are there enough chargers and outlets to plug into so we don't run out of spiritual energy? Do we recognize those chargers and outlets?
- The season of Lent has called us to focus on these questions. Lent reminds us to “plug in” and charge those most important spiritual batteries. And Lent reminds us as Christians we have plenty of “charging stations” available to us. We have beautiful prayers and devotions, the sacraments (especially Penance and Holy Communion), scripture readings, daily Mass, and Sunday Mass. And at the center of each of these is the source of spiritual life and spiritual energy we so desperately need – at the center of each is Jesus.
- As Lent draws to a close, it sets aside a particular week for us to pay extra close attention to our spiritual needs. Today, Palm Sunday, starts that special week in our Church year called “Holy Week”.
- And the word “Holy” has several meanings, among them: different, other, good. And Holy Week is all of these.
- It is a week we Christians set aside to recall that, in His great love for us, God promised that one day we would return home to heaven and share in eternal life. It is a week we remember God kept that promise and we remember just *how* God did that. He sent His only Son to lead us back!! God promised us a savior and He delivered!! God tells us if we follow Jesus; obey His teachings; allow ourselves to change and become more like Jesus – then we will never run out of spiritual energy on our journey home to heaven.
- Year after year we set aside this week as special. So that we never forget. Never forget what Jesus said and did and what He gave up for us.
- But Holy Week calls us to go beyond just remembering. It calls us to be amazed that God could love you so much, love me so much.

- So much that He would not deny us. So much that He would save us no matter what the cost. Jesus could have avoided all this – His arrest and torture and crucifixion. He could have walked away at any time by telling His enemies: “Just spare my life and I will deny everything I ever taught, you will never hear from me again”.
- But He didn’t. He came to lead us back home and He knew the only way back is to follow Him – to be like Him – Christ-like.
- He loved us so much He gave up His own life to show us that sin and death has no power over Him and no power over us if we follow Him. He showed us eternal life is real and we belong there.
- He loved us so much He gave us Himself in the Eucharist so that He could dwell in us, guide us and strengthen us on our journey back home to God.
- Our readings this past Lent show how wonderful life is when we accept that love. Remember how life miraculously changed for the woman at the well and the man born blind. We see the amazement and joy as Martha and Mary see their brother Lazarus brought back to life. But we also see lives of anger, guilt, confusion and envy for those who rejected that love, as did Judas, Pilate and the Pharisees.
- Holy week calls us to take these memories, this amazement and re-double our efforts to actively follow Jesus.
- Our readings this Palm Sunday point to certain actions we are called to as Jesus’ followers. Actions that will re-charge our spiritual batteries.
- We are called to trust as Jesus trusted in His Father’s will - no matter how difficult or bleak things might seem. Jesus knew what was ahead of Him as He headed for Jerusalem. But He mounted that donkey, pointed it toward Jerusalem and road toward those challenges with trust. Trust that God was squarely in control and God’s will was best.
- Our world brings Jesus and His values before us almost daily and challenges us to make a choice. We feel pressures to accept values and norms contrary to Jesus teachings. We face choices in raising our children according to Jesus’ values when there is so much out there that devalues life and tries to divide us. We face challenges in caring for the sick and needy. We face our individual fears and anxieties.
- We are called to “ride into” those challenges trusting that God is squarely in control – trusting that God is with us.
- Trust re-charges our spiritual batteries.
- In the Passion reading we are reminded as followers of Jesus we are called to forgive – and not just when it is easy or convenient. There is a sentence in the very long Passion reading that might easily go unnoticed but drives home the absolute necessity to forgive. Jesus says: “after I have been raised up, I shall go before you to Galilee”.
- Jesus knew His disciples would run in fear; He knew Peter would deny knowing Jesus. Yet Jesus forgave all that and promised they would be together again – in Galilee after the resurrection. As followers, we must do as Jesus did – offer healing and forgiveness rather than anger and grudges.

- Forgiveness re-charges our spiritual batteries. It makes us more Christ-like.
- And as followers we are called to prayer. Before every important event in His life we find Jesus at prayer. We see it again in our readings today as He prayed in the garden right before His arrest. Jesus prayed for courage and strength. Because of His prayer He was able to face everything else that came next.
- Prayer guides us, focuses us and strengthens us. Jesus showed us we can talk to God. We have a Father who listens. Prayer charges our spiritual batteries – makes us more Christ-like.
- Our lives can get over crowded, hectic, with all types of pulls and demands for our time and attention.
- But we are Christians – and this is Holy Week!
- Let's promise ourselves to make this week different. Let's rededicate ourselves to trust, prayer and forgiveness.
- We have the opportunity for penance on reconciliation Monday. We have beautiful liturgies to attend in person again this year (and also live streamed for those unable to attend) on Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Day.
- Let's make this week truly Holy - A time to stop and see the hand of our God outstretched toward us, inviting us to "plug in" and recharge our batteries.