

PALM SUNDAY

OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

St. Luke 22:14-23:56

This week is what the Church calls Holy Week. Today, Palm Sunday, we commemorate the entry of the Lord into Jerusalem as the people waved palm branches and olive branches and called for Him to be their king, and we continue through Holy Monday and Holy Tuesday until the Church enters the Sacred Triduum, or three days, of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. On Holy Thursday, we will commemorate the Last Supper of the Lord at which He instituted the Sacrament of the Eucharist and founded the Priesthood, so that His work, His mission, could be continued for all ages to come. On Good Friday, we will remember the crucifixion of the Lord. The day that evil shot its silver bullet, where Satan threw all that he had at Christ, and brought about His death. On Holy Saturday, we mourn with the Blessed Virgin Mary and those disciples who remained faithful to the Lord as they sat by His grave. Then on Saturday evening, amidst the darkness, we celebrate the Easter Vigil and the breaking-in of the light of Christ as He rose from the dead; when Satan's power was shown to be as nothing in comparison to the power of almighty God. When suffering and pain and torment and evil and death was shown to be not ends in themselves but means to an end.

In our own lives we undergo a similar triduum: the fear of what is to come, the pain of suffering, and the freedom from torment when our suffering passes. There may be a time or this may be a time when the apprehension and fear and the pain and suffering will not give way easily to freedom or even the hope of freedom. You may battle with your cross, whatever it may be: drugs, alcohol, abuse, loneliness, alienation, depression, insecurity, and you find the weight of

it overwhelming and with no one to help you carry it. This, then, is when we face suffering and evil and say, "This may kill me, but I will not die forever." We can say that because, and only because, we have Christ. God made man who loved us so much that He chose to die rather than to have us suffer forever. That sacrifice of Christ, that sacrifice in service to you and me, that sacrifice in service made in love, gave birth to new and eternal life in the Resurrection.

Every day in the Mass that sacrifice of Christ is made present again. He wants so much to be a part of your life that He has made Himself so readily available in the bread and wine that become His Body and Blood. That small host that is truly the Body and Blood of Christ can be crumpled to dust in your hand. That is the risk that Christ is willing to take. Out of love He is willing to make Himself so vulnerable that you could destroy Him in your hands. That's what love does—it makes itself vulnerable.

Turn to the person sitting next to you. Would you die for that person? Would you, for love of that person, for love of God, sacrifice your life if it meant that that person would live? Do you think that the person sitting next to you is worth it? Because the Lord did. And He thought you were worth it. And He still does.

As a human being, even the Lord felt impelled to ask that He be spared the terror of the Passion. We too can pray in this way. We too can complain before the Lord, like Job, we can present him with all the pleas that arise within us when we are faced with the injustice of the world and the difficulties of our lives. When we come before Him, we must not take refuge in a world of make-believe. Praying always also means struggling with God, and like Jacob, we can say to him: "I will not let you go unless you bless me!" (*Gen. 32:27*). The life, death and resurrection of Christ are for us the guarantee that we can truly trust God.

When we touch the Cross, or rather, when we carry it, we touch the mystery of God, the mystery of Jesus Christ. The mystery that God so loved the

world—us—that he gave His only-begotten Son for us (cf. *Jn.* 3:16). We also touch the fundamental law, namely the fact that without this “yes” to the Cross, without walking in communion with Christ day by day, life cannot succeed. The more we can make some sacrifice, out of love for the great truth and the great love, out of love for the truth and for God’s love, the greater and richer life becomes. Anyone who wants to keep his life for himself loses it. Anyone who gives his life—day by day in small acts, which form part of the great decision—that person finds it (see *Mt.* 16:25).

Christ’s life mattered not because He was rich, because He wasn’t; not that He was successful in His business, because by our standards He was a failure; not because He never suffered, because He did, but because He believed that a life worth living is lived in service firstly to God and then to one another, out of love for God, and that whatever sacrifice that demanded, even His own life, it was worth it.

Without Holy Thursday and Good Friday, there would be no Easter Sunday. Without the crucifixion there would be no Resurrection. If there is nothing that you would die for, then you have nothing to live for.