

St Pius & St Anthony Palm Sunday Year B Homily

What I love about Holy Week is the tremendous amount of scripture that we are going to hear all the through the week: with each day and culminating on Holy Saturday night (when if all the readings are shared amount to nine readings in one sitting). A lot of scripture to digest! Today on Palm Sunday we read one of the entire gospel accounts (yes, I know a long reading) of Christ's Passion (in a three year rotation Matthew one year, then Mark & then Luke). A passion account reading goes basically from just before the last supper, through Jesus' betrayal and arrest, his questioning and trial Herod, Annas-Caiaphas-Sanhedrin, and ultimately before Pilate, all leading to walk to the cross, to his death and burial. Then after palm Sunday, we come to Good Friday, and the assembly reads again a passion account but from another gospel as it is always John's version on Good Friday; We do all this reading to remind ourselves of the details, everything that Jesus went through to bring about our salvation; Of course, the big question through it all, the existential bug behind it all, is "Why?" (yes the simple answer is God's Love is behind it, and our own sin big time!) But, Why did they do that to him? Do you wonder like me, every time I hear the passion, I think ***"Somebody has to stop that!"*** An innocent man should not suffer, or worse, God suffer, & be killed in our name. ***This has got to stop***-such senseless, barbaric cruelty to a good man. But then I have to ask, "What would I have done back then?" Put me in the crowd. Where would I have been? Would I have done anything? What if that 'somebody' to stop it, was me? Well, okay, I didn't live back then, so what about today? What do I do now in the face of human suffering

Every question about what or (would I have done) something back then, has to be met with another question, "So, what am I doing now?" What about now....how serious am I about focusing on current sin and suffering in the world-the daily, inhumane, unjust and anti-social actions or failures to act, that oppress and persecute innocent ones here and now every day? Add to that, what about my own personal sense of sin, how serious am I about turning every day, every minute to the Lord (for forgiveness) and also for the grace to remain by Christ, faithfully serving the

Father's will; living as much, as best as I can Christ's own love, following His example and doing as he did.

Yet, before I get too worked up; and anxious and overwhelmed by the immense suffering in this world, and the fact that my own sin adds to the world's sin, I have to humbly admit first that I can't do a thing alone to remedy it, without going to Christ. It takes Christ. Anything even that I can do, require his grace, and my keeping my walk modeled on his Way....if I let his priorities be my priorities, I may be able to add something to the divine solution to suffering and sin in the world: Jesus does tell all His disciples that "Daily we must take up our crosses and follow him." (Luke 9:23).

Am I in the crowd crucifying Jesus, or in the company of Jesus comforting Him and others along His Way? We do have hope-It is Christ.

So, in the face of the bad news of Christ's passion and suffering, and in the face of the bad news of what fallen human nature is, in the face of the bad news of 'our own moral weakness', what do we do? Turn to Jesus, as he said, "Watch and Pray" WATCH him- he is our hope and, PRAY, staying in close in relationship and nearness to him..... and the good news is that Jesus shows us good in the face of bad:

In face of cruelty, He shows there is compassion

In face of terror, He shows there is tenderness.....

So what do we do? We do what he did!

My favorite go-to scripture passage when it comes to wondering 'What do I do now?' I can't go wrong imitating Jesus's spirit and work! It's Matthew 25:35-36 "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' ... goes on in verse 40 "whatever you did for one of these least brothers/sisters of mine, you did for me.'

So if we look again at the passion story, and go to its end (we know its true end is not just suffering & death, it is also resurrection- so let's rise a little with Jesus now) if we go back to the sad story of Jesus' suffering, but now with His hopeful eyes too, we will see His goodness at work in other people even there in the midst of suffering and pain.

- 1) In Mark 14:6 Jesus says about a servant woman with a great heart who anoints His body, he says "She has done a good thing" verse 8 "She has done what she could. She anticipated, anointing my body for burial." That sounds a lot like Matt 25:36 "I was ill/suffering and you cared for me"
- 2) In Mark 14:15, two faithful servant disciples, go and to make Passover meal preparation for Jesus and the disciples to have their last supper before his death. That sounds a lot like Matt 25:35 "I was hungry, and you fed me."
- 3) In Mark 14:15, a man in the city (id's as carrying a jar water), gave help to strangers bringing them into his home and his master provided a room in the busy (no vacancy) city, for the Passover rituals to be celebrated by Jesus and His disciples. That sounds a lot like Matt 25:35 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me"
- 4) In Mark 15:46 "Having bought a linen cloth, Joseph Arimathea, took him down, wrapped him in the linen cloth and laid him in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance to the tomb." He gave him a proper burial- gave Jesus his own tomb! That sounds a lot like Matthew 25:36 "I was naked and you clothed me"

So while we cannot alone solve the problem of our sin and suffering in the whole world, we can do our little part in the little part of the world we live in. Like these small acts of love, (true comfort measures) some men and women performed for Jesus Himself through His suffering, we can imitate in our own way to remain in His company. Entering this Holy week, and praying about and retracing those final days and hours of Jesus walk to the cross for us, May we follow Him, as those first disciples did, and in face of even terrible things, in the face of his sorrowful passion, may we continue doing what he did compassionately to alleviate ***some of the suffering Jesus still endures in the least of His brothers and sisters.***