

St Pius & St Anthony Homily Palm Sunday (1st Gospel) Year C

I don't know if you have the same feeling I do every time I hear the Passion reading (We heard Luke's version today and we always read the same one from John's Gospel on Good Friday), but every time I read it all the way through, the words that jump to mind over and over again are, "Stop, please. This has to end!" I had the same experience, like many people did watching Mel Gibson's 'The Passion' when Pilate's guards sadistically scourge Jesus for what seems like 15 minutes, and then stop. I think it's over and then they simply turn him over, and continue the same brutality on his front side! "Okay, already." But what is that rising up in me, but my denial of what Jesus went through for us, or better said, it is my 'guilt'. So, when we read the Passion, I say to myself over and over, 'Someone has to stop this-an innocent man suffering so cruelly.' But all of this reminds me of the story of the man who was praying so feverishly one day about the suffering of children & the poor in the world. He laid it all on God one day in prayer, saying, "*God, I love you, but you have to show yourself, you have to stop this innocent suffering here on earth. Do something!*" And after a few moments of silence, the man heard God's voice back saying, "Yes, I have done something, I put you there to address it." So I have to ask myself in the face of the Passion, what am I doing? Am I with the crowd, or with Christ? How does that saying go, but that "Every Sin of mine is another nail in Christ's flesh". So, I need to stop! I think we all feel this compunction when those self-condemning words cross our own lips, as we all called out 'Crucify Him, Crucify Him' a minute ago.

But something else more important than me, strikes my heart most about the Passion reading, and it is that Jesus just keeps on going through it all. He trusts the Father's Will absolutely. There is no giving in for Him. Oh, yes, He feels the weariness of suffering like all us (we see it in His prayer in garden- "May this cup pass by me, but if not, Your will be done" or when Jesus inevitably slows p, stumbling on His walk to Calvary, & for sure, as He hung upon the cross when He cries out, "Why do I feel so abandoned?") But despite all of His weary feeling carrying the weight of our sins, Jesus goes on, and on and on. John's gospel says it this way, that (John 13:1) "When time came, He loved His Own, & **loved them to the end**". Jesus does all of this for us-(Out of Love for us). Then finally, making it all the way to the end upon the cross at His death, Jesus says (John 19:30) 'It is finished'. Yes, He went the whole distance for us, loving us to end.

And how unlike our Savior, we are! Because for us, don't we all eventually give in or give up. Maybe not at the first difficulty or hang up, but after the fifth time, we reconsider and excuse ourselves thinking maybe it's not meant to be. But Jesus never does. Against all opposing forces, He keeps faith in the Father and bores on through to the end-to Calvary. Because Jesus knew His purpose from the Father, and He kept 'mission focus' all the way through. As His disciple-followers, we should too. But do we? When the mission gets tough, do we simply slip away?

Jesus does always provide for us, ***if we only trust Him enough*** and walk along with Him. I think in our first gospel today back in our Palm procession, we see Jesus helping the apostles take training-steps with Him to walk His Way! He gives a little mission: 'Go, pick up a donkey for me.' But He sends them & provides every step for them along the Way. It unfolds just as he indicated. This shows how when God calls, He also supplies. If God sends us, He also attends us! Let's check out the mission again: Jesus tells them to go to a village across the valley where they will find a 'never ridden before' young colt, so untie it and bring it back. If you happen to be stopped, just say 'The Master needs it' and you will be cleared. ***And that exact thing happens.*** They successfully return with the colt for Jesus. This is so similar to another little mission(another training) in Luke 22:9-12 about them going to prepare the Passover meal ahead of time. He gave specific details instructing them to, "Go into market, find man with water jar, follow him, and the room he leads you to, say "Master is coming tonight & the room will be will opened to you." And it happens exactly that way! Persevere with the plan and Jesus will provide. These training missions tell me two things 1) Jesus has the plan, and it works (if you work it) & 2) He has more helpers than we ever realize (*they may not be wearing our same shirts but they are on our team too*). Who were the colt owner and the water-jar man-undercover disciples? Jesus does say this, in John 10:16 "I have other sheep than this fold.....they are mine too" So, always, Jesus leads us and does so with other friendlies along the way, if we trust Him!

We heard also in the gospel today that Jesus quizzes the apostles on this vindicated trust in Him. In Luke 22:35 He asks, "When I sent you forth without a money bag or a sack or sandals, were you in need of anything?" They say back, "No, nothing," Earlier, Jesus had even sent them out on missions with nothing in hand. And yet they had all they needed. Jesus always came across for them.

So this coming week, as we walk through the Passion with Christ, we will feel pulled to stand down and get away (like Peter & others), but He calls us to

remain faithful ('Stay with me' He says). This is the Father's will. Our test, is trusting Him. When we are weary, falling, being opposed, rejected, mocked, even seeming to fail, the Father will vindicate us with Jesus. It is His Plan. He will provide (of course, God does as Good Friday and its absolute trust, will open up to Easter Sunday Resurrection, with its absolute victory over sin and death!)

But we have to keep faithful, and do our little part by not adding any nails to Christ's crucifixion. With Jesus, we carry on (even with our cross-whatever or whoever it is- for if it is God's plan, He will provide.) We may wonder what gave Jesus such peace and serenity as He walked to Calvary? It was His trust in the Father, His communion of love with the Father, knowing that His Plan somehow would triumph, yet also it was Jesus' communion of love with us, that he was doing it, accepting it all to the end, because of loving us (don't we often muster a little more strength, going a little farther when we know it is for someone else?) So, Jesus asks us to 'follow Him', to stay with Him and do as He did trusting that He will give us all we need.

Unique Notes about Luke's Passion Account (Details only found in Luke)

As a theme, Luke spotlights the 'reconciling & peace-making work of Jesus' especially in the last days/moments leading to the cross. For example, only in Luke do we hear about Jesus 'healing' the high priest's servant who had come to arrest Him. This servant had his ear cut off in the scuffle and Jesus took time to stop and forgive, touching the man & healing him (Luke 22:50-51). Or we only hear in Luke 23:12, that by mutually interacting with Jesus, Pilate and Herod were brought to make peace with one another (*though they had formerly been enemies-not that that was good for Jesus staying alive but it is another sign of Jesus' forgiveness/peace-making*). Or also in Luke 23:27-29, Jesus (unique to Luke) takes a moment on his Way to the Cross to comfort and bring peace, to some weeping women accompanying him. Or also, that it is only in Luke that we hear of the 'Good Thief' being forgiven even in his final hour on the cross (Luke 23:39-43). Or greatest of all, is Jesus' intercessory prayer of forgiveness for us all, as He is about to die, when he prays, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Thanks be to God, we have such a peacemaking and forgiving Savior!