

Palm Sunday (Cycle A) Homily
Mass Suspended due to Coronavirus
On-Line Homily

St. William, Champion | April 5, 2020

MT 21:1-11 | IS 50:4-7 | PHIL 2:6-11 | MT 26:14—27:66

DEACON BOB MINTUS

I am told that one of the best attended weekends of the Church's liturgical year is Palm Sunday. Why? Because it is a time that we get something... a simple palm. For many of us, the palm will return home with us and probably make its way to a spot in one of our rooms in the house. Maybe it will be placed behind a crucifix on our wall. Or maybe someone with more skill will shape it in the form of a cross, and it will grace our desk, or a table, or stand by itself on a wall. Hopefully, we'll bring it back a year from now to be burned to make the ashes we are marked with next Ash Wednesday.

What is it about that palm that makes it so special? Is it because we, like the crowd that day, commit to following Jesus? Or is it because we link the palm to the Passion, and it is a continuing reminder of Jesus' love for us, second only to the cross?

Maybe this year, more than usual, we can relate to the emotional highs and lows in our Gospel readings, that begin with Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, and conclude with His suffering and death. For many of us, this Lent took off on such a high note, with so much promise, only to be stifled as many of us have been sequestered in our homes, cut off from friends and family, as well as our family of faith. The last few weeks have been a challenge to our faith lives, as we've made sacrifices in our lives, not only for our good, but also for the good of other people. But watching the mass on TV isn't the same as actually being here, gathering with our church family.

Out of all the masses of the year, Palm Sunday is the one where everyone in the assembly takes part, from the procession at the beginning of the mass through the Passion, where we become the voice of the crowd. Granted, the voice of the crowd is not a part that puts us in a good light; we begin the

Mass with cries of “Hosanna!”, but within a very short time, we are chanting, “Crucify Him!” The Gospel doesn’t give us any insight into the mind of Jesus, but it wouldn’t seem all that unreasonable if he wondered if we were the same people. And yet, maybe we have been given this role, because at times, we have those days in which we follow Jesus closely, and then there are those days in which we struggle and go astray.

Jesus remains steadfast and committed to his mission, despite the cost – it is his passion, what drives him, why he came to us. As a friend betrays him, as the crowds turn on him, as his disciples flee, as Peter denies him repeatedly, as he is whipped and tortured, and as he hangs on a cross, he never wavers. His mission will be a success, and because of it, our lives have a richer meaning, as heirs to the Kingdom of God.

So this year we gather, admittedly in a very unusual way that nobody would have ever expected, to receive a piece of a palm. Let us reflect on what it means in our lives, not just for this weekend, but each time we see it throughout the year. Let it remind us of our promise to follow Jesus, not just in times that are easy, but more importantly at those times in which we struggle to be faithful. Let it strengthen us, inspiring us to live out our mission in our lives with the same passion Jesus had. And, when we return it to be burned for Ash Wednesday next year, let us be able to say that it was more than just a decoration; that there was no palm without passion!