

Readings: Isaiah 50:4-7; Psalm 22; Phil. 2:6-11; Luke 22:14 – 23:56]

Once upon a time, a little boy had a devastating blood disease but recovered. However, his sister was not so fortunate. She needed a blood transfusion and because the boy had the same rare blood type, the doctor asked him to donate his blood to his sister. He seemed stunned, but wanted to help his sister and agreed to do so. As the process began, he smiled at his sister bravely, but by the time it was over, he seemed tense and quiet. The silence was broken only when he looked up and asked, “Doctor, when am I going to die?”

He thought that giving his blood for his sister would mean giving ALL of his blood, which would kill him, so he was going to die. Yet even believing this, he had managed to say, “Yes.” Imagine that!

Palm Sunday is more accurately called Passion Sunday. In this context, Christians often assume that “passion” is the word for the suffering and anguish of Jesus’ death. However, the word first describes something felt deeply, powerfully, almost absolutely.

The story of the little boy, recounted by Robert Emerson Coleman in his book, *Written in Blood*, reminds us that a person can love so passionately that she or he would be willing to give up life itself out of love for another. The solemnity of this day and the reading of the Passion of Christ means most when we realize it’s not just about the pain. It’s about the love (meditation by *Father Larry Janowski*.)

If Holy Week had ended on Good Friday, we might call it Unholy Week.

It would describe only too closely the path of Isaiah's faithful and suffering servant, who comes to rouse hearts, yet endures a brutal reception as his words fall on deaf ears. Passages from prophecy and psalms like bitter Psalm 22 warn us down through the centuries that being just and innocent in no way guarantees success.

We like to think of religion as spiritual life insurance. If we walk the moral line, God will protect us from harm, keep our children safe, fend off disease, spare us evil times. But Scripture reminds us repeatedly that it doesn't work that way. The most obedient man who ever lived was arrested, humiliated, tortured, and killed by a means that would make the delicate person look away in horror.

If we learn anything from Passion Week, it's that being good is no inoculation against suffering. But this isn't the only takeaway lesson of Holy Week. Through it all, we catch glimpses of the merciful Father in whom Jesus put the deepest kind of trust. We see this mercy in the meal Jesus transforms from a simple supper to an everlasting promise of life. We hear the tinkling bell of hope in the assurance Jesus gives Peter, that despite an initial failure to respond with courage, he will find the grace to be strong in time.

Jesus restores the ear of His enemy's servant damaged during His arrest, as if He didn't have more pressing concerns to worry about. Though Jesus shows such attention to a servant, He ignores the powerful people who stand before Him that day: the governor from Rome and the king of Judea, either of whom could have spared His very life.

Jesus consoles the mourning women, intercedes for the forgiveness of His executioners, and welcomes a repentant criminal

into Paradise. The Way of the Cross, we come to recognize, is not primarily an avenue of suffering but the path of God's mercy.

What is your "Way of the Cross" in your lives today?

Where do you most gather your strength in faith? What causes the greatest doubts?

St. Luke assures us in today's Gospel that we are not alone in our suffering. Have you found that to be true in your own life?

Unite YOUR Way of the Cross, your Via Dolorosa, your Way of Sorrows, with that of Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother, Our Lady of Sorrows. It is the safest journey any of us in history can take. Let us take it with Him this week (meditation by *Alice Camille*).

And let us remember that this is NOT the "End of the Story." Christ is Risen from the dead with Easter Joy. And in my wild imagination, I picture Jesus deciding that the first place He will make His Resurrected appearance is to His Blessed Mother:

There He is standing inside the front door.

"Mom, I'm home!" AMEN!