

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion (B): Let Us Prayerfully Walk with Our Lord Jesus!

Isaiah 50:4-7; Psalm 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24; Philipians 2:6-11; Mark 14:1-15:47

Dear family and friends of CCST,

The Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion is our door to enter Holy Week! It is an all-encompassing celebration with stark contrasts, a blend of triumph and suffering, victory and agony, glory and pain.

The palm branches symbolize Jesus' victorious entrance into Jerusalem, an entrance that paradoxically also signifies the beginning of his trials. His triumphant arrival, heralded by cries of "hosanna, hosanna to the Son of David," precedes the humiliation and torment he would face on the cross. This triumphant entry ignites a chain of events leading to his brutal passion and violent death - an irony indeed!

But why do we engage in this poignant retelling of our Lord's passion and death? Is it designed to provoke feelings of sorrow or guilt? And why do we encounter the Passion narrative twice this week - first from Mark's Gospel today and then from John's Gospel on Good Friday? Shouldn't our focus be on joy, resurrection, and new life?

The answer resides in the irrefutable fact that suffering and death are woven into the fabric of human existence. We see them in personal losses and worldwide atrocities. The responsorial psalm captures our human response when cornered with distressing circumstances: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me." This is a plea of helplessness, recognizing one cannot provide without divine assistance. It is a prayer of resignation, surrendering oneself to the power of God. Our Lord Jesus also echoes this prayer on the cross (cf Mk 15:34).

Jesus' story is a testimony to humanity's trials and a testament to God's profound love for us. It shows how far God will go to accompany us, that God doesn't stand aloof from our pains; He has lived through them firsthand through His Son, who humbled himself even unto death on the cross (cf. Phil 2:6-11). The cross symbolizes God's solidarity with all who suffer, assuring us that even in our darkest moments, he offers comfort, strength, and redemption.

The Passion narrative isn't about inducing sadness or guilt; it challenges us to reflect on our lives and responses to suffering. It encourages empathy, compassion, and a readiness to support those marginalized and oppressed. It reminds us that true joy and resurrection come through the transformative power of sacrifice and love.

What, then, should be our response after hearing the Passion narrative? We shall walk with Jesus!

Let me propose four statements of faith for our walk this week:

1. "I will immerse myself in the rituals and discipline of the Church during Holy Week." We actively participate in the prayers, paschal triduum, fasting, abstinence, and almsgiving.
2. "I will bring myself to the Lord before the cross and kneel for his healing and forgiveness." We will bring all in us that need healing, forgiveness and redemption, and let Jesus' dying and rising, our dying to our sins and rising to new life.
3. "I will intentionally offer prayers for the many suffering of my brothers and sisters." We will pray for the victims of wars and terror, human trafficking, refugees all over the world, abused women and

children, babies who died because of abortion, abandoned and sick people, those who lost their jobs, victims of gun violence, people experiencing poverty and natural calamities, and many others.

4. "I acknowledge that the suffering of our brothers and sisters around us and the world is the ongoing passion of Jesus in our time, which needs Christian Charity." We must confess that their sufferings and pains call forth our Christian response in whatever we can afford and offer to help.

May you have a holy and transformative walk with our Lord this coming Holy Week.

Fr. Manny Hewe
Pastor

"Praised be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation,
who comforts us in all our afflictions."