

Palm Sunday
March 20, 2016

Today the church became the Jerusalem suburb of Bethany. It was there that Jesus had spent the night at the home of friends. Bethany was the jumping off point for His procession into Jerusalem. The center aisle of our church was transformed into the dusty road on which our Christ rode surrounded by cheers.

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Holy Week were quiet days for Jesus. Wednesday is called Spy Wednesday because, according to Matthew, Judas sold Jesus out that day for a pocketful of change.

During this time, we remember the words of an unknown poet: "I thought I would follow Him. But, when my feet drew near to Calvary at dead of night, I quailed in utter fear. Whereat a voice came whispering through darkness like a sea: 'Child, child, be not afraid. Your cross is occupied by me.'"

On Holy Thursday, our sanctuary becomes the Upper Room. The altar becomes the long narrow table where Jesus sat. We will take part in or witness the reenactment of the foot washing of the disciples, the twelve men chosen as the apostolic foundation stones of the Church. To them Christ gave the gift of Christian priesthood and through them he has handed down to us the perfect memorial of his suffering and death in the Eucharist.

We will honor our Lord's gift of his Body and Blood as we carry the Blessed Sacrament in procession following Thursday's solemn liturgy of "The Lord's Supper." We will remain in silent adoration until midnight where our church becomes the Garden of Gethsemane. There Jesus undergoes his dark night of the soul.

Before Him is a cruel death. Our thoughts might reflect those of Joseph Mary

Plunkett, executed in the 1916 Irish rebellion: "I see His blood upon the rose and in the stars the glory of His eyes. His body gleams amid eternal snows. His tears fall from the skies."

Good Friday is a day where we shall crowd into our church to enter more fully into the death of the Lord in our celebration of the Passion.

We join ourselves to the obedience of the Son that we may also obey the Father's will and die a truly "Christian death."

Holy Saturday with its silence reflects the breathless waiting of a world yet held in bondage to ferocious death. The faithful are tested as they persevere in hope for the Lord of life to manifest himself and give light to every man and woman. No liturgy is celebrated on Holy Saturday, for Christ's Church cannot pray except through the living Christ. We watch and wait at the silent tomb with our Lady and the other faithful ones who have not abandoned Jesus.

And on Easter Sunday, we might think of the words of Frederica Mathewes-Green. "Do you love me enough to tell them I have risen? Christianity is rare among the world religions in containing an explicit command to tell unbelievers the Good News and to urge them to convert. It is an uncomfortable calling. This obligation to evangelize is perhaps the aspect most resented by those outside the faith and most neglected by those inside.

It is an awkward calling. But it is a command of Jesus, as blunt as the calls to love our enemies and to care for the poor."

The fifth century pope, St. Leo the Great, spoke eloquently in a homily about the mysteries of Holy Week:

"True reverence for the Lord's passion means fixing the eyes of our heart on Jesus

crucified and recognizing in him our own humanity. The earth-our earthly nature- should tremble at the suffering of its Redeemer. The rocks-the hearts of unbelievers- should burst asunder. The dead, imprisoned in the tombs of their mortality, should come forth, the massive stones now ripped apart. Foreshadowing's of the future resurrection should appear in the holy city, the Church of God: what is to happen to our bodies should now take place in our hearts."