

Introduction to Palm Sunday and Holy Week – basics of our faith and life.

Introduction: The Church celebrates today as both Palm Sunday and Passion Sunday.

1. It is on Palm Sunday that we enter Holy Week, and see illustrated Jesus's remarkable humility. We also welcome Jesus into our lives, asking him to allow us a share in his suffering, death and resurrection.
2. This is also the time we remember and enter more deeply into the events which brought about our redemption and salvation. The Holy Week liturgy presents us with the actual events of the dying and rising of Jesus and the incredible fact that God would do this for us.
3. The liturgy also invites us to practice in our lives here and now what Jesus went through then. In other words, we commemorate and relive during this week our own dying and rising in Jesus, which results in our healing, reconciliation, and redemption.
4. This can lead us to a more profound relationship with Jesus. Just as Jesus did, we identify with him by actively participating in the Holy Week liturgies. In doing so, we are allowing Jesus to forgive us our sins, to heal the wounds in us caused by our sins and the sins of others and to transform us more completely into the image and likeness of God. Thus we will be able to live more fully the divine life we received at Baptism.
5. Proper participation in the Holy Week liturgies will also deepen our relationship with God as well as our union with Jesus, and increase our faith, our humility, and strengthen our lives as His disciples.
6. This is also the week when we should lighten the burden of Christ's passion as daily experienced by the hungry, the poor, the sick, the homeless, the lonely and the outcast through our corporal and spiritual works of mercy.
7. The Passion Sunday liturgy combines two contrasting moments, one of glory, the other of suffering as the week begins with the welcome of Jesus into Jerusalem and culminating in the drama of his unjust trial, suffering, crucifixion and death.

Major events of Holy Week:

1. Palm Sunday – The triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. Note that Jesus, the Lamb of God, enters the city at the same hour that the lambs for sacrifice were brought to the Temple.
2. Holy Thursday – The washing of the disciples' feet, the Last Supper and the institution of the Holy Eucharist.
 "If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow so that as I have done for you, you should also do (Jn 13:13)."
3. All the events of the Stations of the Cross.
4. Good Friday – the crucifixion, death and burial of Jesus.
5. Vigil Mass (Saturday night) – baptisms and confirmations, entrance of new persons into the Church, celebration of the resurrection which occurred before dawn.
6. Easter Sunday Mass – celebration of the resurrection of Jesus.

Over for homily notes and reflections

Homily Notes for Palm Sunday, March 25, 2018

Readings: 1st - Isaiah 50:4-7; 2nd – Phil 2:6-11; Gospel - Mark 11:1-10, Mark 14:1 – 15:47

1. Summary: The events of Holy Week remind us of and allow us to **participate in** the most fundamental events of our faith. We recognize Jesus as the “suffering servant” who suffered and died for the forgiveness of our sins. This is why he is truly called the “Prince of Peace.” One value these reading highlight is that of humility. In addition to being the fundamental Christian value, we can recognize that this same value of humility is key to success in the world. See book, *Becoming a Leader of Character*, by Gen James L. Anderson and Dave Anderson. In this book the authors identify humility and courage as the two most important virtues (habits) for becoming a *Leader of Character*.

2. First: Isaiah 50:4-7: This is the third of four passages in the middle section of the book of the prophet Isaiah which scholars have called the Songs of the Suffering Servant. Today’s first reading is the third Servant Song. These four descriptions of the Servant of the Lord God were taken by Jesus and recognized by the early Church as revealing the suffering nature of the Messiah. This “suffering” in his life demonstrates his profound humility. The four passages are: Isa 42:1ff, 49:1ff, 50:4ff, and 52:13ff.

3. Second: Philippians 2:6-11. This further describes the humility of Christ and his willingness to humble himself and suffer for others. “He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even death on a cross.” Jesus was divine from all eternity. But he didn’t cling to that. Rather he emptied himself and became human. He accepted further humbling by obeying the human condition even unto death by crucifixion. So, God highly exalted him, giving him the highest title in the universe. I suggest reading the rest of Chapter 2 to reflect on our obedience and service in the world.

Note that this reading was written approximately 30 years after the Easter events. It really is a summary of the incarnation, suffering, death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus. This shows us the distinctively Christian way of life, humble service, suffering and sacrifice for others in the imitation of Christ. This is the demonstration of the meaning of “agapé” love (Jn 15:13).

4. First Gospel: Mark 11:1-10: The procession into Jerusalem. Jesus knew how they misunderstood him, hoping for a liberator, and how they would turn against him, as he revealed himself as the Prince of Peace, a sacrificial offering.

5. Second Gospel: Mark 14:1 – 15:47. The Passion of the Lord. Jesus submits to the Father’s will, offering himself for the sins of the world, showing us that this is the way of life and salvation.

6. A short summary of the message of the readings.

7. These readings demonstrate the most central aspects of our faith. First, that Jesus, being God, humbled himself in becoming man, and suffered and died for our sins. Secondly, that we are to imitate Jesus in his suffering and death, always living for others and giving of ourselves for them. We are called to be humbly obedient to God, following his words (as did the Servant of the Lord did in the first reading). Only by placing our faith and our obedience in Jesus Christ can we expect to please God and gain heaven. This we restate every time we participate in the Penitential Rite at the beginning of Mass.

8. Danger of egotism. There are ideas and ideologies and psychologies in our present day world that seek to entice us away from God and lead us to protect our egos and enter into the way of destruction.

9. Lifestyle difference. Today we are generally expected to practice “fight or flight,” not to stick around and suffer or risk ourselves. In teaching, many districts forbid teachers from breaking up fights. What should we do if someone is being physically bullied or beaten? How about if people are being taught error? Are we willing to give testimony? What would the Lord Jesus want of us?

10. Relevance of the virtue of humility for our lives. In the book, *Becoming a Leader of Character* by General James L. Anderson, the author identifies humility as the most important habit (virtue) that a person can have in order to become a “Leader of Character.” To be this kind of person in the family or in the business world will lead to success. Our participation in Mass is designed to call forth humility. The example of Jesus today is a powerful example of humility. If we are regular in Mass, we will be trained in humility. What happens to most people when they aren’t regular at Mass or at Church? Conclusion, bad idea to miss Mass.