

Brief Homily for Palm Sunday

It would be difficult to exaggerate the contrast in today's liturgy on this Palm Sunday. The triumphant cheers that accompany Jesus as he enters Jerusalem for the last time will turn to raucous jeers as he carries his cross to the place of crucifixion that is Calvary. This did not happen by accident, both the religious and Jewish leaders had become more and more enraged by his association with the poor, the outcast, the unclean, the sinner. His pushing of boundaries as he 'fulfilled the Law and the Prophets' and his criticism of the hypocrisy of the so called righteous, meant that a final confrontation was inevitable.

His own disciples do not cover themselves in glory as he is betrayed by Judas, denied, not once but three times by Peter, and deserted by the rest. It is the women who remain and walk with him. As we listen, or this year because of lockdown, we read Matthew's account of the Passion, we remember that many people today suffer from betrayal, denial and desertion. The poor, the disenfranchised, the refugee experience such awful treatment on a daily basis, and a question we might want to ask ourselves is how do better accompany those who are carrying these heavy crosses, not to Calvary, but in Syria or Lesbos or on the border between Mexico and The United States or wherever there is injustice or a gulf between rich and poor or those affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

We speak of the passion of Jesus as something that was done to him, but we can also reflect on the passion within Jesus, a powerful love within him which drove him to such lengths and enabled him to face hatred, humiliation, violence and pain, refusing to settle for anything other than giving himself totally in love - 'he did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself' as our 2nd reading puts it.

There are people today who have a similar passion for truth, for justice, for non violence, for human rights, some of whom suffer tremendously, especially when they upset those with power who see them as a threat. As we follow Jesus to Calvary we can think of this journey as one that happened two thousand years ago, unable to do anything about it. Or as we feel his pain can we also feel the pain of so many who today, like him, carry a heavy cross, and if so we are left with the question of leaving them alone to shoulder their burdens or, like Simon of Cyrene, help to carry those crosses. The choice is stark but the answer could leave things as they are or, change, even one person's life, for the better.

Bidding Prayers for Palm Sunday

Celebrant:

At the beginning of this Holy Week as we walk with Jesus through his last days on earth and enter into his suffering and death, we turn to God in prayer for the world, the Church and ourselves.

Reader:

For the world groaning under the pain of the Coronavirus pandemic - that we will listen to what the planet is saying to us and think very carefully about how we use the world's precious resources.

Lord in your mercy

For leaders and Governments throughout the world - that they will use whatever resources are necessary to keep as many people safe from this pandemic.

Lord in your mercy

For all those in the medical and caring professions who put themselves at risk to keep the rest of us safe - that they will be protected from contracting the virus.

Lord in your mercy

For each other in this time of crisis - that we will act responsibly in the best interests of others and ourselves.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the coronavirus, for Tom Tomney and Molly Matthews who died recently and James Burns, James Joseph Crewdson, Mary Duckworth, Barbara Bennison, Terence Greenwood, Walter Bickers, Sheila O'Gara, Thomas O'Gara, Nicola Poulter and Anne Flashka whose anniversaries occur this week - that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory. Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

All loving God in this time of pandemic be close to your people, calm our fears, encourage those in the medical and caring professions, cure those who are ill, comfort the bereaved and receive the dead into your loving presence. We ask this through Christ our Lord.