

**HOMILY PALM SUNDAY YEAR B**  
**“Faith In The Cross Of Christ”**

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All week we have been trying to discover, in a deeper way, who Jesus Christ is for us. In his gospel, Mark tries to explain what it means that Jesus is the Son of God, because everyone had a different idea. One student expressed it well: “They were expecting a king, in purple robes, but saw only an ordinary man, a humble saviour.” Even St. Peter did not understand - he tried to keep Jesus from suffering on the cross. At the end of the gospel, a Roman soldier, looking at the cross and seeing Jesus hanging there almost naked, is able to say, “Truly this was the Son of God.” Amazing faith!

Today, in this mass, we have moved from Palm Sunday (Praise) to Passion Sunday (Suffering). Mark’s gospel teaches us that Jesus, the Son of God, is a Messiah who suffers out of love. We are invited to put our faith in the Cross of Christ, and follow him to our own Cross, to experience our own passion, death, and resurrection, as a way to the new life of Easter.

An example of someone who has done this is Velma. I met her at a Search weekend for youth. She then attended a Christopher leadership course and a Parish Renewal. She began to tell me her story of her dream to be a nun, her abuse, and her angry reaction of drugs and alcohol and resentment. By her involvement in movements in the Church, like Marriage Encounter and Cursillo, as well as AA and Al-Anon, she was beginning to learn about a God who did not prevent her suffering and pain, but a God who was a suffering Messiah, who suffered for her, and could be found in her pain and suffering. She stopped escaping into alcohol and drugs, and went on a healing journey of counselling, grief workshops, and working the 12 steps. The steps took her through her own Paschal Mystery, her own Passion, Death and Resurrection. In the Creed we pray that Jesus “descended to the dead, the unknown, into hell.” He would go with her into her own living hell, touch her wounds with forgiveness and acceptance, and heal her.

She did a Step 4 moral inventory (her cross), shared it in Step 5 (her empty tomb), and in Step 6 began to feel her anger (her cross) and express her anger in positive ways. She wrote a letter to her abuser describing what he had done and how she felt, and sent it to him. She prayed to let it go (her empty tomb), and was able to forgive.

I remember a session with her when she went through anger, sadness, and emptiness. She was going through the stages of dying to her resentment, and finally got to that emptiness that Jesus experienced when he became human (“He emptied himself, accepting to become human, to the point of death on the cross”).

The next day, she had a dream of an empty church with only a picture of Jesus on the wall. She was kneeling, saying her rosary on a black box, and a whirlwind came to take away the

box. That dream told her that she was on the right track, going into her own pain, with Jesus, who now would take her resentment away. She was set free, and went on to be rectora for a Cursillo in northern Sask. She is now trying to make amends to her family and others she hurt (Step 8,9) and is feeling their pain (her cross) and hoping they will accept her apology (her empty tomb).

We are invited, like her, to go into our own desert, our own pain, during the rest of Holy Week. We must stop pretending, look at ourselves, deal with our hurt and loss, and our sin and sinfulness. Our children, our families are suffering, and we may not even know it. We must start listening to one another, trusting each other with what we are truly feeling, and turning around the unwritten rules of dysfunctional families, "Don't talk, trust, feel." We must start talking, trusting, and feeling. In that process, we will find Jesus, the Messiah who suffered for us. In our own suffering and pain, we will find him, touching our wounds and healing us.

Our God is a passionate, loving God who embraced suffering out of love for all humanity. It is not suffering as such which saves the world, not even the suffering of Jesus. That would be to glorify suffering for its own sake, in an unhealthy way. Rather, it is the passionate love of God, shown in Jesus, and in his acceptance of suffering, that saves us. To experience that salvation we are invited to put our trust in Jesus, and follow him through our own Cross, to the new life of Easter.

The Eucharist we celebrate together this Passion Sunday, helps us enter into our own real life drama of the Cross in our lives. The Eucharist especially is our food for the journey through our own passion, death and resurrection, to healing and wholeness.

So, put your faith in the cross of Jesus Crucified, especially during this Holy Week, and find the new life of Easter. Experience Easter now, this week, in your life, your family, your own pain and suffering through forgiveness and acceptance, and you will truly be able to celebrate it Easter Sunday with all of God's people gathered here today.