

PALM SUNDAY YEAR C  
“The Way of The Cross”  
(Isaiah 50:4-7; Psalm 22; Phil 2:6-11; Lk 22:14-23:56)  
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Let us enter into a moment of silence, to let such powerful readings penetrate our minds and touch our hearts.

The message that comes to me from the Word of God this Sunday is basically: “Trust in Jesus the Saviour, and follow him on his Way of the Cross”.

Each year, on Palm Sunday, we listen to this same story, but from a different gospel. This year is the gospel of Luke. Let us prayerfully review what Luke shares with us.

Luke begins with the account of the Last Supper, the Eucharist. What a powerful intimate moment for the apostles. For us today: Jesus turns the bread and wine we offer, into his Body and Blood, which he knew would be broken and shed for us the next day on the Cross. To follow him today is to be a Eucharistic people, to recognize him in the breaking of the bread – an intimate moment for us, a hug from God.

Jesus then speaks of service. To follow him, and to live the Eucharist in our lives, is to live lives of humble service, not control or power over others. From his birth to his death, an almost shocking “powerlessness” characterizes the ministry of Jesus.

Then comes the agony in the garden, where he confronts the weight of our sins; Peter’s denial, and Pilate’s questioning. We are reminded of the reality of our sins, and also of the need we have to answer those questions for ourselves: “Who is Jesus for me?” in our own day and culture. Are we like Herod, missing the message of humble, loving service, preferring power, and always seeking something sensational, some sign, to satisfy our curiosity and lack of faith? Do we dare put our trust in the “powerlessness” of the Cross?

Jesus teaches us a silent lesson in what he does with the cross. He accepts it, carries it, and shares it. So must we, in our own lives. We need to accept our own crosses; carry them in prayer, patience and love, and share our burdens with others, reaching out for help, and forming a community belonging, affirmation and caring as we do so.

In the end, the death of Jesus on the Cross, and following him, is all about forgiveness. Jesus forgives those who are killing him, and forgives the thief hanging with him. The key to the kingdom is forgiveness. We must pray that his forgiveness flows through us to anyone who has hurt us in any way.

Velma was sexually abused by a relative at the age of fourteen. She carried resentment towards him for fourteen years, until her own daughter was molested by his son. They moved to another community. Ten years after that, her granddaughter was abused by one of her sons, the victim’s uncle. Then Velma fell apart. The memory of what she went through, all her anger and resentment became too much for her to carry. She sought help

from her pastor, who put her through a 12 Step healing process. She learned to express her hurt towards her abuser with love, following Matthew 18:15. She met with him in the presence of the pastor, read a letter to her abuser, and to the surprise of both men, asked him to forgive her for the way she had treated him for over twenty-five years. Then she got up and gave him a hug. She has since then shared a meal at table with him, and even danced with him. Her story at a 12 Step pilgrimage blew away her listeners. This truly is the new way that Jesus brought about, the new way he invites us all into.

One of the best things we can do during this Holy Week to live this gospel, is celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation, or Step 4 and 5 of the 12 step program. Taking time to face our own sins and wrong-doing, puts us up on the cross. Sharing that with another human being, is sharing that cross, just as Jesus shared his. Receiving forgiveness and healing, is already a sharing in His resurrection, an experience of the Easter we are preparing to celebrate in a few days.

In a nutshell, the lessons of Palm Sunday are these: we are a sinful people who need a saviour; Jesus is the Saviour who redeems us through his love and redemptive suffering; and Jesus calls us to follow him, with faith and love, through humble loving service on our own way of the Cross. He nourishes us with the Bread of Life and His Word, as we place our faith in him and his way of forgiveness and loving service, the way of the Cross.