

I Remember

Palm Sunday and Holy Week Readings – Luke 22:14-23:56

I remember a very specific Palm Sunday procession from my childhood. I was, maybe, 12 years old. This is a memory of something that had never been done before in my life. St. Mary's got permission to close off Jefferson Street in Iowa City so that we could journey the two blocks from St. Mary's Catholic school to St. Mary's Catholic Church very early on Palm Sunday morning.

All of a sudden, my faith was no longer a private devotional experience between me and God. Rather, this was a step to proclaiming my faith publicly. It was exhilarating. The day was warm, the sun was shining. Several hundred Catholics stood in the street with banners and palms waving, ready to walk the approximate 700 feet to the steps of the old Church. We were no longer in the darkness of a dimly-lit church hidden from view. We were out in broad daylight, enthusiastic and proud of our faith in Jesus.

Vatican II had opened the way to a different sense of ownership and celebration of the Catholic faith. Vatican II called the laity into their rightful place among the various roles within the Church. Vatican II is still calling us to proclaim Christ in the world today. We are called to proclaim and to celebrate these mysteries within the rituals of the Catholic Church because this one week is the most important week of the entire liturgical year. Why?

St. Paul gives us the answer today, **“Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Because of this God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name, that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”**

We, as Catholics, tell this story, over and over, year after year, so that we do not forget what Jesus has done for us. We ritually remember the various elements of this important week that mark the significant truth about Jesus. We continue to tell the story about his passion, death and resurrection because we have a responsibility to do so. Jesus himself tells us on Holy Thursday, after washing the apostle's feet, **“I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.”**

As we walk in procession today, let us remember Jesus' triumphant entrance into Jerusalem. Let us remember his passion as we read today from St. Luke's gospel (22:14-23:56) and again on Good Friday from St. John (18:1-19:42). Let us have our feet washed on Holy Thursday as one of his humble disciples. Let us remember Jesus' great gift of his Body and Blood, instituted at the Last Supper and celebrated at every Mass since. Let us never forget this story, which we celebrate in movement, song, ritual and prayer. This story celebrates and proclaims Jesus's great sacrifice and gift for us. Let us remember so that on Easter we will more fully embrace the joy of Christ's resurrection and our inheritance of everlasting life.

Happy Holy Week!
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