

## Palm Sunday, 3-28-2021

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus. I'm sure the Gospel was very long, so I'm not taking too much time. I want you to close your eyes and imagine for a few seconds, the whole Gospel and the role that we are playing in it. I was just reading the Gospel. Definitely I was just placing myself into the very person of Christ - that is true - the priest is the *alter Christus*, another Christ - but as I read, I immersed myself into that. And I am sure that you, also, did the same. But when it comes to the matter of shouting, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" what are the things that might have gone through your minds? Did you feel that you were shouting against Jesus or were you just reading it as part of the crowd? The part of the crowd was assigned to us, and we are reading it. But it really happened with the people of Jerusalem. Just before the arrest of Jesus, they were enjoying all the good things. They were looking for Jesus - "Where is He? We want to see him." They had their own agenda for being helped, being cured of their own sicknesses, but still their longing for Jesus was there. But after a few days they turned against him, shouting, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" What a dichotomy between the goodness and the evil. It is like a person saying to my face, "You are so good and I appreciate you," and then within a few seconds, turning on me.

How painful it would be if a friend of ours, someone close to us, would betray us after some time. That's what happened with Caesar and his friend Brutus. "You, too, Brutus?" Brutus had just stabbed him. It was a heinous crime, a true friend of Caesar betrayed him. Yes, sometimes, in the life of Jesus, it happened that people whom he believed to be close to him, finally turned out to be betrayers. His own disciple, who had dipped from the same dish with him, betrayed Jesus.

Yes, my dear sisters and brothers, it happened 2000 years ago. But it can happen even today. We, all of us, can betray. All of us can definitely crucify Jesus.

It is said that a person, looking at a picture of the crucified Jesus, put himself into the scene and asked, "Jesus, how much do you love me?" And Jesus, extending his hands on the cross, says, "So much, I love you." Jesus asks each one of us "How much do you love me?" Then taking the hammer and the nails, crucifying him, we say, "I love you so much." Yes, that crucifixion of Jesus can take place in our daily life, when we go against the love of God by our own sins.

When we disobey his own commandments, we daily, day in and day out, crucify him. Yes, my dear sisters and brothers, in the book of Isaiah we read, that he has taken upon himself all of our infirmities, and given us a new life, a life in fullness. Very clearly, we heard in the second reading from the letter to Phillip, that being God, emptying himself, he came down as a human being, embraced the cross, and died on the cross. And that is the love he has for every one of us.

Today we can call this week the week of love, where He is going to completely give all of himself - his own body. He is shedding his blood and saying "I love you so much." And thinking on this act of Jesus - entering into the city of Jerusalem to suffer, we really need to consider how much we can say, "Lord, I love you so much." Not by taking the hammer and nails to crucify him, but to support him as he carries his cross, for our salvation. Being like another Simon, Simon of Cyrene, to ease the weight of the cross. Whenever we sin, we press on him the weight of our own sins. Let us ease him by being holy, by becoming worthy as his own children. Amen