

Victimhood with Integrity

Palm Sunday (Year B)

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Like many people in the world today, Jesus was a victim. He was abused by the powerful, mocked by his peers, subject to false accusations, and killed unjustly by his religious leaders. Like many people in the world today, he did not get the justice he deserved. He did not have someone to truly advocate for him on a legal level and he died an innocent man. What made Jesus different from many people in the world today, though, was that he didn't let his victimhood totally define him. He knew that no one could touch the deepest part of his soul.

The prophet Isaiah wrote the following about the suffering servant of the Lord in our First Reading: "I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard; my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting." In our long Gospel narrative, we see this prophesy come to fulfillment in Jesus, as he endured his passion with integrity. For all the times he was questioned, abused, or hurt, he refused to show hatred, self-justification, or even anger. He continued to show compassion, care for others, dedication to the truth, and love of God through it all. He knew what he could not control and accepted reality for what it was.

Being a victim is a heavy burden to carry. It is quite literally a cross. But like Jesus, may we never so identify with victimhood that we forget our integrity as sons and daughters of God.