

Reflections for Child Abuse Prevention Month 2020
April 5, 2020
Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

AT THE PROCESSION WITH PALMS – GOSPEL 35 YEAR A [MT 21:1-11](#)

At the core of all abuse and exploitation is a failure to recognize the life and dignity of the human person. Whenever we view others as mere parts, rather than a whole person, as a means-to-an-end, as less than a person, or as less than ourselves we place them at risk for exploitation and harm. This use of another is the opposite of love. It takes humility to truly love – to will the good of another. Jesus, the Messiah, the King of Zion, enters Jerusalem “meek and riding on an ass...the foal of a beast of burden.” Jesus is the perfect example of humility. His life provides an example of authentic love: a total, self-sacrificing, gift of self – the opposite of abuse and exploitation. We are called to live and love like Christ.

Prayer to Become More Like Jesus
God, our Father,
You redeemed us
and made us Your children in Christ.
Through Him You have saved us from death
and given us Your Divine life of grace.
By becoming more like Jesus on earth,
may I come to share His glory in Heaven.
Give me the peace of Your kingdom,
which this world does not give.
By Your loving care protect the good You have given me.
Open my eyes to the wonders of Your Love
that I may serve You with a willing heart.
Amen.

AT THE MASS [IS 50:4-7](#)

Sexual abuse and exploitation are devastating – not only because of the physical harm and emotional pain caused by the abuse, but because of the weight of shame carried by those in its wake. Instilling guilt and shame are among the tools used by an offender to prevent disclosure. Our blame and shame culture further adds to the burden of those who experience abuse and those who love them. None of us escapes the cloak of humiliation that covers when our clouded vision clears and we realize how blindly we had trusted others to love and protect and lead. The fear of shame and disgrace can lead us to turn inward, away from assistance to stop abuse and promote healing. Isaiah tells us that with the Lord God as our help, we shall not be put to shame, we need not turn back. He will give us the strength to face abuse and the courage to speak out against exploitation.

Dear God, give me courage,
for perhaps I lack it more than anything else.
I need courage before men against their threats
and against their seductions.
I need courage to bear unkindness,
mockery, contradiction.
I need courage to fight against the devil,
against terrors and troubles, temptations,

*attractions, darkness and false lights,
against tears, depression, and above all fear.
I need Your help, dear God.
Strengthen me with Your love and Your grace.
Console me with Your blessed Presence
and grant me the courage to persevere
until I am with You forever in heaven.
Amen.*

RESPONSORIAL PSALM [PS 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24.](#)

How many of us, in-the-midst of suffering, have plead to God for rescue? How easy it is to imagine that God has abandoned us when the pain continues! We begin to believe the words of those who mock us. We begin to feel unloved, unlovable. It is so hard to see the truth – that we were created in the image of God who *is love* – far from unlovable! God desires only good for us, but He also does not take away the free will of any of His children – even those who abuse and exploit. His deepest desire is that every one of His children will chose to love – to love Him and to love each other. God does not abandon us in our suffering. He walks with us, carrying us through. He became man to save us, and in the process experienced all of the pain of abuse; scoffing and mocking, torture and neglect, betrayal and exploitation. There is no suffering He cannot empathize with. He is not far from us. He is our help and our aid.

*Incline unto my aid, O God.
O Lord make haste to help me.*

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*Incline unto my aid, O God.
O Lord make haste to help me.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.*

READING 2 [PHIL 2:6-11](#)

There is a tendency for humanity to view humility and obedience as a weakness. Beginning with Adam and Eve we have desired equality with God, failing to recognize that it is in our humility and weakness that we are most like Christ, who is exalted by God... whose name is above every other name... at whose name every knee should bend!

*Almighty and Everlasting God,
You have given the human race
Jesus Christ our Savior as a model of humility.
He fulfilled Your Will by becoming Man
And giving His life on the Cross.
Help us to bear witness to You
By following His example of suffering
And make us worthy to share in His Resurrection.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son.*

Amen.

