

Fr. Curtis Miller

April 5, 2020

Homily for Palm Sunday

For the past five and a half weeks in these homilies, we've been following Jesus through the Stations of the Cross, His path to calvary. Today, we come to the end of that journey. When we began our journey through Lent, probably none of us expected the radical sacrifices that we would be making. One of the hardest sacrifices has been not being able to gather to celebrate Mass. But the whole message of Holy Week reminds us that on the other side of suffering and sacrifice is the joy of Easter. So we unite of smaller daily sacrifices to Jesus' perfect sacrifice of His own Body and Blood, His very life. This is the same sacrifice He offers at every Mass.

In these past weeks, and in today's Gospel reading, we have followed Jesus as He is sentenced to death, as He takes up His cross, falls three times, and encounters His mother Mary, Simon, Veronica, and the women of Jerusalem. Now stripped of all visible dignity and nailed to a cross, we come to the end.

The Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross. Every one of us is under the shadow of death: ourselves, our family, and loved ones. This has always been true, but we're reminded of it now more acutely. This is frightening. But we must remember that God loves us and will always take care of us, even in death. Jesus accepted death on the cross—the pain of the nails, the struggle to breathe, all of it—so that when we face death, we will know that even there, Jesus is with us. He first drank the cup that each of us must drink, so that He could say to us, “Be not afraid. I am with you.” Father, into Your hands, we commend our spirits.

The Thirteenth Station: Jesus' Body is Taken Down from the Cross. One of the most famous sculptures in the world is Michelangelo's *Pieta* in the Vatican, depicting Mary cradling the lifeless Body of Jesus after He is taken down from the cross. There is no more tender scene: the indescribable bitterness of the loss of a child. When we lose loved ones, may we feel united to Mary in her sorrow. May this moment also encourage us to repent of our sins, to try to atone for the pain we have caused others.

The Fourteenth Station: Jesus' Body is Laid in the Tomb. Whose tomb was it? It belonged to Joseph of Arimathea, probably as the place of His own burial, and that of his loved ones. He thinks he is performing an act of charity for Jesus. But Jesus performs an even greater act of charity by taking Joseph's place in the tomb. In fact, Jesus takes his place in the tomb or grave of each one of us. He suffered the punishment of death in our place. And by His resurrection, Jesus transforms the graves where we will one day lie, from a place of sorrow and finality to a place of hope in the resurrection. When you and I are laid in our graves one day, we are placed somewhere that Jesus has already blessed by His presence. There, Jesus will take our hands and lead us home. We have followed Jesus in His sorrows; He will lead us beyond them into the joy of eternal life.