

Palm Sunday (b) Homily Fr. Ralph Recker

You know, Palm Sunday must be the Most Schizophrenic Feast of the Church Calendar. I mean, it starts out with triumphant acclamations, and then degenerates into a bloody execution.

We start by joyfully singing “Hosanna, Hosanna, All hail the King of the Jews”... and end up cruelly crying, “Crucify Him...Crucify Him...”

And this happens every year.

On this Sunday, which is properly called Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord, we read one of the synoptic accounts of Christ’s entrance into Jerusalem, and then his Passion. This year we heard from Mark, the shortest of the Gospels, but a full 1/3 of it is dedicated to just this one week of Christ’s life... and death. On Friday, we will read John’s account. John’s Gospel is the longest of the four and no less than ½ of his Book comes from this last week of Jesus’s life here on earth.

We make a big deal about celebrating Christmas, but it’s interesting that neither of these two Gospels even mentions the Nativity at all. Well, John does say, “the word became flesh”, but that’s it. 4 words about his birth, as opposed to 9 chapters about his death. So obviously, it is Jesus’s Passion, death and Resurrection that is important. It is in fact the Most important event of Christianity, well of all history really.

The second reading from Philippians actually captures this bi-polar theme well, when it says that “Jesus Christ...though he was in the form of God....He emptied himself and took the form of a slave... he humbled himself, being obedient.... Even unto death.”

That death is what we just heard about, and that sets the tone for this upcoming Holy Week, as we near the paramount point of Christ’s passion on Good Friday.

But... Why!!! Why Does Christ submit to this?

He is after all, GOD--- Why does he become a slave, obedient to death?

Well, He answered that question at the Last Supper, which we just heard, and which we are about to celebrate, and which we remember each time we gather for the Eucharist. He tells us.... This is my body.... Which will be given up FOR YOU!!

This is the cup of my blood.... Shed for YOU!

That's right... YOU!!!! Sitting right here in St. Mary's Church this (evening) morning.

Given up and shed so that we all may have eternal life and share in the Resurrection, which is the true end of the story.

Please, Do enter fully into the Holy Week liturgies and realize what Christ suffered for us, and we do share in it.

But I'm going to give away the end of the story. Next Sunday, we will learn that the tomb is empty. Now, how much that means for us then, will probably depend on how much we actually put into **this** week along the way, but do not let the tragedy of the Passion keep you down. We must always look at it through the perspective of the Resurrection.

Because, as the Centurion attests, "Truly, this man IS the Son of God.... And that is cause for nothing BUT, Jubilant Joy.