

Homily for Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

5 April 2020

Sacred Heart – St. Louis Parish

Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel. Hosanna in the highest.

Reading 1 – Isaiah 50: 4-7

Psalm 22 – **My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?**

Reading 2 – Philippians 2:6-11

Gospel – Matthew 26:14 – 27:66 *The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ*

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Hosanna to the Son of David! Hosanna in the Highest! Today my friends we remember two events. The first event that we recall is Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. He has been at the outskirts of town. He has been going into the city, but not in a way that people would see him or catch him. But now he enters with great fanfare. The people are singing songs and laying down branches of palms on the ground along with their cloaks and Jesus rides on an ass into the great city. People are asking, "who is this?" This would not be the common way that someone would enter the city. This entry is not subtle, but no entry in the eternal city ever is. Jesus is entering Jerusalem, but he is also showing us how we enter into the new Jerusalem that is one day promised to each of us.

Even during these days of being told that we need to stay home and to keep apart from one another, the church may be empty, and we are not able to gather to celebrate this wonderful entry that Jesus makes, the Church still joyfully is greeting new members into the faith. On Saturday morning at

Sacred Heart Church we welcomed four new members into the Church through baptism. The four little ones were baptized into the faith and made their entry into the new Jerusalem with Jesus. The crowd might have been significantly smaller, but our congregation continues to grow even when we are asked to stay apart. We welcome Joseph, Lawrence, Dulce and Miguel Angel into the Church. Even while our church is empty, our numbers continue to grow.

The second part of our celebration this weekend is our reading of the Passion of Christ according to Matthew. I must admit that I always have a hard time trying to come up with something to say in regard to the Passion, because I always seem to be at a loss for words. I admit that often, when I had a deacon, I would have the deacon preach. That gave me an opportunity to prepare for the homilies and liturgies of Holy Week. Since I have been at Sacred Heart – St. Louis Parish I have not had that luxury, since we do not have a deacon here.

Firstly, I would encourage us to spend time with this reading. It is long, but to read through the passion can be so transformative. Not only read the passion, but also try to find a recording and listen to someone else read the passion. This year I have added a recording of me reading the passion to the parish website (www.shstl.org) and you can also find other recordings of this reading all over the internet this year. Hearing the Passion read in another voice can give us an amazing perspective on what God is trying to teach us.

God indeed is trying to teach us something and if we have not realized by now, God is really trying to get our attention right now. Now, I am not saying in any

way that God either created the COVID-19 or purposely have allowed it to continue, but He certainly is taking this opportunity to speak to his people. What is he saying to you? What is God saying to the Church, the world, our parish and community? There are many things that I believe that he is trying to say to us and I pray that he has gotten our attention.

We have entered our own passion. We are dying inside. We are not used to having our freedoms restricted. Especially here in the United States. We are also not used to not having things that we always have, or to find different ways of doing things that often are usually so easy. There are people that I know that are home and are very lonely and are afraid. We all have our own little deaths that we are experiencing, but just as with Jesus' death, we will rise. On Easter morning, the tomb was found empty; Jesus rose to new life. This gives us hope. Hope that not only at the end of our lives that we will rise to new life with Jesus, but also that our staying at home will also come to an end and we will be set free. Let us continue to take this time to listen to what God is saying to us because when we rise from our seclusion, we will be a new creation and we will rise to a new way of living (we have to face reality, our world is going to be different, it will never be the same), so let us not waste this time or grace that God is giving to us and be ready to rise to new life when we are called in emerge into the world once again.

May you all have a blessed and sacred Holy Week!

Fr. James