

## ***Holy Week: 2021***

Today Passion (Palm) Sunday, Christians around the world enter the most holy week of the year. We begin by reading St. Mark's account of Jesus' passion and death. Even before we hear the gospel, we know the sequence of events the Last Supper, the agony in the garden, and the arrest, trial, torture, and execution of Jesus we know how everything will end. So right now, we don't need any further commentary or explanations. Hopefully, the hearing of Mark's version of these events has moved us, reminded us what Jesus underwent for you and me. Please take time during the week to read and meditate on **Mark 14: 1 – 15: 47**.

Jesus, however, is not the only character in the story. St. Mark's narrative rightly concentrates on him, but a host of others appear, and we might ask ourselves which of these characters are we more like? We are the voice of the unnamed woman, shattering the alabaster jar and "wasting" expensive oil to anoint Jesus, formed to do the right and just things even when we may not fully understand. Sometimes we are Judas as betrayer; James and John, falling asleep during their watch; Peter, so certain and faithful until tested; Pilate, longing, for justice yet following the crowd. The stories of Palm Sunday are *our* stories. Sometimes we are even the voice of Jesus on the cross, weeping and asking, "*My God, my God why have you abandoned me?*"

These words do not mean that all hope is lost; on the contrary, they are a sign of deep faith and passion. The anguish of the psalmist is evident, but a few verses later the writes, "*You, O Lord, are not far from me; O my help, hasten aid to me.*" In our anguish over what we have or have not done; in our distress over what is happening to us; we cry out to God who is our help. When have you felt abandoned by God? When have you cried out for God's help? Though trouble surrounds, God is ever with us.

Consider the past year with the effects of Covid-19 that brought grief, loss, change, and heartbreak. So much was taken from our communities---lives, hopes, and celebrations turned to dust. But so much bloomed in hope and love over the past year---opportunities, adjustments, and newfound community. From the wisdom of Palm Sunday and the wisdom of the past year, our community learns the capacity that we have the capacity to bring great joy and great pain to one another. God calls us to be vessels of hospitality, like those welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem. And God intimately knows the temptation and anguish of failing to meet this challenge. It is precisely because we have the intimate God that we must break the cycles of violence and discord carved into our humanity and rise again, a week from today, in Easter joy. Holy Week begins with some of the most intense, deep and devastating celebrations of our faith. Like today's liturgy, it can feel like a roller coaster of emotions, symbols, and stories. We enter this week like, Mary Magdalene and Mary, mother of Joses, at the tomb watchful, attentive, on the beginning of a long journey.

All six weeks of Lent has prepared us for this three-day celebration. During these days of the Sacred Triduum, we will remember the ministry of service to one another Jesus gave to his disciples at the Last Supper. On Good Friday we gather to hear St. John the Evangelist's account of the passion and to contemplate the strange glory of the cross and to venerate it as an instrument of our salvation, and to process forward to receive his Body in Holy Communion. These two days prepare us to gather on Holy Saturday evening for the great Easter Vigil to witness the baptism of new members, renew our own baptismal promises, and to be nourished once again in at the Table of the Eucharist that strengthens our faith and love for one another.

***Fr. Bill***