

Passion Sunday

A palm between two branches

*Larry Gosselin, O.F.M.
Palm (Passion) Sunday*

*The woven palm
of tree branches,
came of wind, rain
night and tomorrow,
the rapture of triumph,
and the suddenness of death.
Jesus is bound into triumphal glory,
now set free to soar into heaven's abyss.
Oh, city of future promises, O Jerusalem!
Where you there, at the triumphal entry?
Where you there, at the sight of the cross?
Where you there, at the empty open tomb?
Are you here now, in the journey of glory?
Hold palm branch woven of painful glory.
"Say to the daughter of Sion,
Behold your King comes now
meek and riding upon an colt
a foal of the beast of burden."
Hosanna the King of David!
Behold, your King on high!
"Hosanna in the highest!"
Blessed is He who comes
in the name of the Lord.
And the people asked,
"Who is this King?"*

My dearest sisters and brothers in Christ,

Today, in this very special Palm Sunday, as we begin our Holy Week celebration, and in the face of this pandemic of the Coronavirus, we stand strong, united, and hopeful, even though we are not able to gather together in community and communion as the Body of Christ. We, as the

Body of Christ, wait in our own contemplative monastic cells in this “solitude of separation,” celebrating the solemnity of these sacred days. This is a stark contrast to our accustomed way of faithfully journeying in these sacred days. This brings us into the harsh realization of the image that we have in our liturgical remembrance of Passion Sunday, where we see the emergence of Christ coming into the Holy City of Jerusalem triumphantly riding atop a colt, and hearing the cries of the huge gathered crowd together proclaiming: “Hosanna to the King!” And here we are seeing ourselves in this safety isolation, not able to be gathered together as the People of God. What a stark contrast this represents and gives to us. But this is what it is, and this is how it is for us this year, and this is how we are asked and given to celebrate this Holy Week. Let this not be a demise for us, but rather a promise that God is with us, and that we are united and together with Christ. In our normal liturgical procession on this day, we hear the Gospel story at the beginning of the liturgy, that Jesus is triumphantly entering into the City of David, Jerusalem, with the crowds laying out a royal carpet of palm branches, crying out, “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.” But, soon in our Gospel reading for this day, we hear in the Passion narrative that the people are turning from these original chants and are now shouting, “Crucify Him!”

This clash of dramatic moods draws and pulls us into this sacred time of Holy Week. We are also entering into a sacred place, not the holy city of Jerusalem, but the holy place of our hearts as temples “Holy unto the Lord.” Let us open our hearts to receive this great mystery that comes triumphantly, today, as our hope and strength, even in these days of challenge. We may not know exactly what lies ahead for us in the coming days, but we do know that the scourge of Cross, cannot diminish or extinguish the triumph of the life we have been given in Christ. Holy Week calls us into a journey; walking with Christ into the depth of the life we share in God. The cross may be presently in sight, as in the dark, but our vision is clear in knowing the morning of glorious hope won for us in the life of Christ; this we share as we walk together in faith, hope, and love. I believe, and I pray, in all that surrounds us today in our lives, community, nation, and world; that we are all coming into a greater collective and personal appreciation, hope, and identification in the saving power of God, and the person of Jesus.

Pope Francis on offering his prayer for liberation from the coronavirus in Saint Peter’s Square said, “In this storm, the facade of those stereotypes with which we camouflaged our egos, always worrying about our image,

have fallen away, uncovering once more that “blessed” common belonging, of which we cannot be deprived: our belonging as brothers and sisters.”

Let us strive to make this Holy Week as a most life changing encounter with Christ. Let us exchange our normal and expected ways of celebrating these sacred days, and give them to a new understanding and purpose of presence in our world, and in our lives.

As Pope Francis goes on to say: “ Let us exchange the most fervent wishes for Holy Week and Easter in the awareness that the Lord comes to free us: “Blessed be the King who comes in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven and glory in the highest.” There are also those who would like to silence us: “Some Pharisees in the crowd said to him: ‘Teacher, rebuke your disciples.’ He said to them in reply: ‘I tell you, if they keep silent, even these very stones will cry out’.”

Yes, we await with all creation, and as we wait in the hope and glory that is given to us in Christ.

Let us all not be silent!

Let us not be still!

Let us not be frightened!

Let us be free!

Let us shout out!

May all be strong and sure in all that lives in us in Christ.

May the Lord hold us all in passion, protection, care, love, and glory of God that we live out in this Holy Week.

I am your brother in Christ!

Fr. Larry, O.F.M.

Palm Sunday, 2020