

April 2, 2023
Cycle A – Palm Sunday

Exodus 17:3-7

Psalm: 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

Romans 5:1-2, 5-8

John 4:5-42

Notes from Bishop Peter

Theme: This is a day of contrasts.

1. From the first reading: “I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard. My face I did not shield from buffets and spitting.”
2. Contrast: Jesus Christ is the one who fills the universe and all its parts with his presence, and the creator of it and all human beings.
 - a. There are more stars in the universe than all the grains of sand on all the shores of our earth. The next time you are on a shore, pick up a handful of sand and think of this.
 - b. There are galaxies separating themselves from us at a speed of 5.5 million miles an hour
3. Contrast: Palm Sunday and Good Friday. Why did the crowd cheer Jesus and then clamor for his death?
 - a. Palm Sunday: The crowds praised Jesus mainly because they believed that he is the awaited glorious Messiah who would rise up and expel the Romans, returning home rule to Israel.
 - b. Others believe that he would end the world, reward the just and punish the evildoers.
 - c. That’s why Peter and the others are confused. Their idea of a Messiah didn’t coincide with the reality that Jesus wanted to show them.
4. Contrast: Jesus will save us, not by his action, but by his passion.
 - a. First part of his ministry, heals the sick, the blind and lepers, he feeds the hungry, forgives sins and gives life to three dead people.
 - b. He preaches a Gospel of mercy, esp. in Luke XV, the lost sheep, coin, the Prodigal Son.

c. PASSION:

- “We like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:6)
- He will save us by “passive” virtues such as obedience, forgiveness, emptying himself, humbling himself.
- His passion can be understood in another way – his passion of love embraces us in our sinfulness and will never let us go. He is on our side no matter what sins I/ we have committed.”
- He said: “And I, when I have been lifted up (crucified) will draw all people to myself.” (John 12:32)
- **Forgives those who are crucifying him, forgives the good thief and thus shows that God is rich in mercy.**
- He rose from the dead and is now present in your community and in each one of us.

5. Several Points:

- a. The Palm is what we call a sacramental. It is blessed and becomes a sign of your personal commitment to Christ, your King. When you hold your palm, renew your promise to follow him, trusting in his loving presence in your heart and life.
- b. For example, the commitment of the 250 Christians in Douma, Syria who were told by the Islamic State personnel: You have three choices to make in 24 hours: convert to Islam, stay and be killed or leave this town. They chose to leave their town, trusting in the Lord to bring good out of this evil.
- c. The faith of Thomas the Apostle who exclaimed on seeing Jesus risen from the dead, “My Lord and my God,” and of the Centurion when Jesus died, “Truly this man is the Son of God.”
- d. Ourselves: since we believe, are we willing to love and commit our life to Jesus? If we do, he will make us the best persons we possibly can be for, as Saint Augustine wrote, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord and our hearts will be restless until they rest in you.”

Amen.