

Psalm Sunday 2022

I don't even know where to start.

Palm Sunday is one of those days where a multitude of events are happening.

For most people it is the last day of Lent they will be in the Church,

as Holy Thursday begins the Great Triduum.

For others it is a day when their kids can behave like kids

making noise and waving palms all over.

Still for others it is the beginning of the final preparations for the Sacraments of Initiation

and getting the church ready for the Easter celebrations.

What I find the most confusing about Palm Sunday is trying to figure out

what kind of mood I am supposed to be in-- a joyous mood, or a more melancholy mood.

We began our celebration where we blessed the palms,

and sang with great enthusiasm

Then the most amazing thing happens,

we no sooner celebrate this event of great joy,

than we sit down and listen the great passion of Christ.

A truly melancholy moment.

Jesus is humiliated, beaten, dishonored, and hung up on a cross like a terrible criminal.

Great joy...to great sorrow in a matter of minutes.

I don't know about you, but I have difficulty making such a radial shift.

However, I also think there is great wisdom in the Palm Sunday celebration.

Because it clearly shows the link between the joy of being a child of God

and the burden of waiting for the kingdom.

For at the crux of our faith, is the realization that there cannot be salvation without the cross.

There cannot be the joy of heaven without the sorrow of death.

We cannot accept the grace of God, unless we first die to ourselves.

I believe this is a notion many of us acknowledge as part of our faith,

but we are unwilling to accept, or live.

We like to celebrate but we don't like the work that comes with it.

We see this in the gospel.

Who wants to be part of the party to welcome Jesus into Jerusalem.

Everyone was there,

they sang praises to God,

they laid branches before Jesus,

and they were even willing to throw branches, and their cloaks on the road,

to give him the treatment fit for a king.

Everyone was willing to be a part of the festivities.

But when things got difficult what happened, what happened to those who sang his praises

One of his disciples betrayed him,

one of them denied him,

and all of them abandoned him.

Of all the crowd that welcomed him into Jerusalem,

the only people who remained with him were a few women,
and even they stood at a distance.

As we sit in our comfortable pews we wonder,
why would Judas even begin thinking about betraying Jesus.
How could Peter ever dream of denying him.
Why wouldn't Mary, his own mother, come to the foot of the cross.

I have a feeling we know the answer but we are afraid to admit it,
because deep down we know that we too are no different.
Every Sunday we gather for a festive celebration of the Eucharist.
We dress up and bring our children.
We greet one another at the door, and sing praises to the Lord,
We are even patient enough to listen to a long homily,
We don't think twice about putting some money into the collection basket;
And sometimes we even conclude the celebration
with a brunch at one of the local restaurants.
Every Sunday morning, we join with the crowd welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem.
This is a part of our faith that we enjoy, that we are willing to be a part of.
But the Church doors are not locked Sunday after Mass and then reopened next week.
There is a tremendous amount of activity that takes place throughout the week,
so that there is indeed something to celebrate on Sunday morning.
Are we willing to be a part of those activities?
Judas was willing to be a part of the joyous celebrations,
but he was unwilling to accept that there would be times
when he may have to give of himself,
and so he sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.
How many times have we acted like Judas by saying,
I have put my thirty pieces of silver in the collection basket,
what more do I have to do.

It is easy to point fingers at Judas and Peter but the women do not fare much better.
They watch everything from distance.
How many times have we done the same.
I know the preparations for Sunday are difficult, but don't ask me to get involved.
I prefer to watch from my pew.

I have a poster that reads.
When I was lonely you told me that God loves me and then you left me alone and went back to
your family.
When I was homeless, you preached to me and to others about the shelter of God's love.
When I was hungry, you formed a humanities club and discussed my hunger.
When I was naked you debated the morality of my nakedness
When I was in prison, you crept into a quiet place and prayed for my release
When I was sick you fell on your knees and thanked God for your health
You seem so holy, so close to God . . .
But I am still hungry, lonely and cold.

It is not enough to be with God in the joyous moments.

For this is as far as Judas, Peter and the women who watched from a distance,
were willing to go.

We must be with God in the difficult times, the trying times,

Our faith is not just a faith of joy.

It is a faith that immerses us into strenuous and trying times,
so that we can all become instruments of God
to transform the sorrowful, weak and dirty,
into the joyous, strong and clean.

Unless we are willing getting our hands dirty,
and be a part of the burdensome and strenuous times,
we are only living half our faith.