

March 22, 2021

Holy Week

This Sunday is Palm Sunday (also known as Passion Sunday) and marks the beginning of the most Sacred week of the year. On Palm Sunday, we hear two separate Gospel passages. The first passage is read at the start of Mass prior to the procession and recounts Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem among singing and shouting, "Hosanna in the Highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." The second passage is read after the second reading and recounts the Passion of the Lord, the moment when Jesus Christ is defamed, falsely accused, beaten and crucified. The Church, in giving us these two passages within the same liturgy, points us toward contradictory treatment of Jesus. On one hand, He is praised and heralded as "coming from God," and, on the other, defamed and killed. Once more, all this happens within days of one another...in the same city...by many of the same people.

We, in the here and now, are invited to meditate on the sacrifice Christ made for us...in order to meditate on this mystery...we must believe, in fact, that Jesus Christ was real...that He was who we believe him to be and He did, in fact, suffer and die on the cross and rise from the dead three days later. This may seem strange to say for us reading this...after all...we are Christians and Catholics. I am a priest. You are regular Mass goer and one who prays and reads letters from the pastor.

However, it is quite easy to fall into the trap not only of going through the motions...but of allowing all of our other motions to crowd out the reality of that in which we believe. One of the things I did this Lent was re-read some essays composed by C.S. Lewis. You may better know him as the author of the Chronicles of Narnia, e.g., *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*, but he was actually a fine philologist and Christian author and professor.

One essay, in particular, struck me: "God in the Dock." "The dock," you see was the stand in a court room in which an accused criminal is held and questioned. If God were in the dock, this would mean that he must prove his innocence...or, in this case, His existence. Whereas for centuries it would appear that God, the Almighty and Omniscient Judge, determined what is right and wrong or, perhaps, who is a sheep or a goat, now, in our modern world must defend Himself. God defends Himself not simply against claims that He is not all good but that He does not even exist. Interestingly, C.S. Lewis begins His essay pointing out that his premise comes not from his experience with virulent atheists but his experience with those who are well-educated and who would call themselves "christians." He notes that, in his time, the word "christian" has, indeed, come to signify not an individual's belief in a personal God whose Son came to earth, suffered and died, and rose from the dead but rather to signify a person of high moral standard, a person who behaves well, is generally honest and, perhaps, cares for the poor and those who are in need.

C.S. Lewis was not the first to make this observation and he was not the last. Although the list of such people who have made this observation is long, it likely suffices to point out that our last three Popes have made such observations in the hope that we avoid the danger of being a christian without God.

Now, mind you, it is good to behave well, be honest and care for people other than yourself; however, the person of faith is something more than this. A person who believes in a personal God who sent His Son to die on a cross and rise from the dead so that we might have eternal life with Him, knows why he behaves, why he tells the truth and why he helps the poor. This person does it, because Our Lord has

made him and others in His image and likeness and it is this God who is the source of all that is good. The Christian/Catholic determines his behavior not out of some ungrounded moral principle of which origin he is uncertain, but because he has an intimate relationship with the person of Jesus Christ who truly walked the earth, cured the sick, raised the dead and gave his life.

During Holy Week we are invited to not only be good people but to walk with the Person who truly walked this earth, who has spoken to us and continues to speak to us, who was scourged and derided and suffered just as we suffer, and a Friend who did not merely promise to give His life for us but truly gave His life for us.

This Holy Week we are invited not just to believe but know and love Jesus Christ.

Fr. Art Update

As mentioned previously, two weeks ago, Fr. Art entered the hospital for some treatment and to regain his strength. He remained in the hospital for a week and returned home for a week. Although he was not attending Mass with the community, he was with us in the rectory and seemed to be doing better. Unfortunately, he was readmitted to the hospital earlier today. Please continue to keep Fr. Art in your prayers in the coming days and we will keep you informed to the degree that we are able.

Prayers

Please be assured of our prayers for all of you during this Sacred and Holy Time and may you have a truly Blessed Easter.

Sign-up

Please do not forget to sign-up for our Triduum Services and Easter Masses. You can find the sign-up genius on our parish webpage beginning on Friday afternoon, March 26th.

May Almighty God bless you and keep you.

In Christ,

Fr. Thomas Milota