



14 April 2019, 9.15 a.m. | **PALM SUNDAY** Year C

Isaiah 50:4-7 | Psalm 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24 |
Philippians 2:6-11 | Luke 22:14-23:56 (Luke 23:1-49)

SELFLESS SUFFERING

Introduction

Dear sisters and brothers, we have entered into Holy Week. It is a time of tremendous grace and blessing. If today we are experiencing our own crucifixion—our own sufferings—let us unite them with the Lord Jesus. By uniting our sufferings and the sufferings of the world with Jesus on the Cross, we will certainly experience a deep, sincere peace – and not just a peace, but also a hope in the midst of pain.

The richness of Holy Week is seen most explicitly in the liturgical celebrations in which we shall participate. As we participate in this Eucharistic celebration, let us call to mind our sins.

Reflection on the Gospel

There will be no homily after the gospel, which is the Passion reading, but I thought it is important to give a brief introduction to the reading of the Passion, because it is an invitation for us to enter into the suffering and death of Jesus so that we can be with him in the glory of the resurrection.

Every year, during Holy Week, the Church invites us to listen, on two occasions, to the Passion narrative. One is Palm Sunday, also known as Passion Sunday, and the other is Good Friday. On Good Friday, we always proclaim the gospel according to St. John, which describes the Passion narrative of Jesus. However, on Palm Sunday every year, according to the liturgical cycle—A, B or C—we have the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. This year is the liturgical year C, and so we will listen to the gospel narrative of the Passion according to St. Luke.

There are three synoptic gospels, and each gospel has its own perspective and characteristics. Since we are going to listen to the gospel according to St. Luke, we will look at the characteristics of Luke's description of the Passion of Jesus. It is different from the others because it has a very special slant to it. When we understand this perspective and hear the reading, then we will be able to enter more deeply into the Passion narrative.

Luke presents the Passion of Jesus in a positive light. The other synoptic gospels also have a touch of the glory of the resurrection, but in Luke's gospel, the entire Passion narrative is given to us in a very positive manner. Let us look at a few examples from this scripture text.

Firstly, the disciples of Jesus are seen in a positive light. They are not condemned, and in fact, Jesus himself says that his disciples have stood by him in his trials during his Passion. In the Garden of Gethsemane, we see Jesus' chosen disciples falling asleep. Once again, Luke takes a positive attitude towards this, explaining that they fell asleep not because they didn't care for Jesus, but because they were exhausted from deep sorrow.

Even the enemies of Jesus are shown in a positive manner. Thrice did Pilate acknowledge that Jesus is innocent during his trial. The people around are also seen to be grieving as they witness and participate in the suffering of Jesus.

Jesus himself is seen less in anguish, unlike in the other gospels. What is emphasised is his concern for others, even in his own sufferings. He is not looking inwards, but at the people around him and is reaching out to them in their sorrow. We see this concern towards the slave whose ear is cut off, as Jesus heals him.

Jesus also forgives others on his journey on the way to Calvary. He expresses concern towards the women of Jerusalem who support him. He says to them, 'Weep not for me, but for yourselves'. Hanging on the cross between two thieves, Jesus looks at the repentant thief and says, 'Today you will be with me in Paradise'. And then, from the cross, he offers forgiveness and not curses towards those who crucified him.

And so, we look at the whole Passion narrative according to St. Luke in this very positive light. What can we take home for ourselves? All of us go through some or the other form of suffering. However, we each have different ways of facing our sufferings. We can deal with suffering in a noble and dignified manner if we know how to discern the positive aspects of our suffering. Jesus could have rightfully adopted a martyr complex, focusing on his own pain. Instead, he sets an example by reaching out to others despite his own sufferings. He is presented to us as someone who can hold himself together during the time of trial and express concern for others.

Let us pray, as we listen to the gospel narrative, that all of us can go back from this Eucharistic celebration truly determined to be like Jesus, not complaining and asking for attention, but always reaching out to others in the midst of our own sufferings. If you do this, you will find that you will also have come through your own sufferings. And so, the Church now invites you to prayerfully listen to the gospel reading.

After the Gospel

After a moment of silence, we will profess our common faith.

Even as we look at the suffering Christ, we affirm our faith, so that we may receive the strength to go through our own sufferings and help others who are suffering.

The Lord's Prayer

As we say the Lord's Prayer, let us pray that we might be united with Jesus, so that we can face the sufferings in our own lives and the sufferings in the world. We pray, Our Father...



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