



April 5, 2020

Deacon Steve Szmuto's Reflection on the Sunday Readings
April 5, 2020 – Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord
Isaiah 50: 4-7 Psalm 22: 8-9, 17-20, 23-24
Philippians 2: 6-11 Matthew 26: 14 -- 27:66

As I write this on the weekend of March 28-29, 2020, we are all settling in – more or less – into our new routine. With the exception of essential employees, healthcare workers, police, fire and first responders (and thank you to all of them for their service to others), many of us are working remotely from the confines of our homes. Barring any significant and unexpected change (and that is extremely unlikely), we will be participating in the Sacred Liturgies of Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter remotely. And while this is in itself a cause for sadness, it is also apparent (by the numbers of views on our parish Facebook page) that many parishioners and others are participating in Father Mike's celebration of Mass online. When I reflect on this, perhaps there will be renewal in appreciation, participation and attendance at Mass once the restrictions are lifted and we are able to worship together in body as well as in spirit.

"Christ became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name." (Philippians 2: 8-9)

The time between Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem and his passion and death was extraordinarily short. The rapid turn of events shows the vagaries of human behavior when measured against the eternal constancy of the Kingdom of God. Jesus, the one who was welcomed as a prophet with palm branches and hosannas would be soon executed as a criminal: arrested, convicted, scourged, and nailed to the cross. Why such treatment for one who proclaimed a message of repentance, love of God and neighbor, and salvation? Is the human heart so shallow?

The manner of Jesus' suffering and death reminds us of the ongoing challenge of conversion and fidelity, even for the closest of his disciples. Among those who called Jesus friend and master, one would betray him, another would deny him, and others would leave him to die alone. Matthew's account of the Passion poignantly describes the genuine and complete sacrifice of the Lord. Before he breathed his last, he cried out: *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27: 46b)*

The Passion narrative reveals Jesus in the fullness of his being. Eternally divine, he was fully man – capable of undergoing excruciating agony. His sacrifice was not a divine abstraction, a facade, but rather the ultimate experience of human suffering for the expiation of our sins. He, who was without sin, gave himself completely, so that we might be restored as sons and daughters of the Father.

As we enter into Holy Week, the most solemn time of the liturgical year, let us pray for ongoing conversion to the Lord so that, as we share in Christ's passion, we experience the joy of his resurrection. *"Behold, the hour is at hand when the Son of Man is to be handed over to sinners. Get up, let us go." (Matthew 26: 45b-46a)*

With voices raised in praise and worship to God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – let us also pray for the health and safety of all men and women, so that we might become one in love and devotion. Despite our intentional *social distancing*, may we join with our brothers and sisters in heart, mind, and spirit as we look forward to gathering together as Church.

To participate in Sunday and Daily Mass as well as all Holy Week Liturgies, visit the Our Lady of Good Counsel page on Facebook ([@OlgcWestTrenton](#)). In addition visit the parish website at www.olgcc.net and click on the "Bulletin" link to read the virtual bulletin posted each week.

Deacon Steve Szmuto