

Passion (Palm) Sunday – Cycle A  
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April 5, 2020

We welcome the arrival of Holy Week. This Lent and Holy Week is timely. We need to hear the message of Holy Week to remind us that the grace of God that has been flowing over our world since the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ continues to be present to us today. With all the bad news we hear on the international and national scenes, we welcome the Good News of Jesus Christ that offers us hope and healing.

Pope Francis has reminded us more than once that our greatest enemy is the Devil. The Devil is like a roaring lion that prowls throughout the world to attack, to destroy, to deceive, to cause division, to accuse, to instill mistrust and fear in people, to spread lies.

Christianity teaches us that Jesus Christ was sent into the world by God the Father to destroy the power of the Devil and to win victory over sin and evil.

Holy Week is a time for Christians to celebrate that Jesus Christ has won victory over sin and evil, has overcome the power of Satan, and has won eternal salvation for each and every one of us.

We have been hearing reports of millions of Muslims who say that Jesus has been appearing to them in their dreams telling them to follow Him and His Gospel message. In their following Him, they will find hope and salvation for their lives.

The Coronavirus is an invisible enemy that is instilling fear and anxiety into the lives of many nationally and internationally. This is an opportunity to encounter Christ in the midst of a storm, to discover that Jesus is the Rock of our salvation, and that the gates of hell shall never prevail against His Church.

The Catholic Church seems to be at a new spring time. This is a new beginning for the whole church and also for each one of us.

Holy Week is to be a time of observing and celebrating the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The graces that Jesus Christ won for us on the Cross 2,000 years ago were meant for us also in our own time, in 2020.

Holy Week is the most important week in our Christian experience because the liturgical celebrations lead us into the paschal mystery of our salvation.

Holy Week is a time for us to die with Christ so that we can rise with Him on Easter Sunday.

This dying and rising with the Lord leads us into holiness of life, into true fulfillment in this life, and into the promise of eternal life.

Holy Week comes during our spring season when we can see nature coming out of its dormant state into new life.

Farmers and ranchers witness the birth of calves and lambs at this time of the year.

Plants are coming alive again.

The moisture that was received in several parts of Wyoming these last couple months is offering new hope for much-needed water for fields, pastures, streams, rivers, and dams.

During Holy Week we celebrate Jesus' glorious entry into the City of Jerusalem. Jesus entered Jerusalem in triumph to complete His mission as our messiah and savior through His Passion, Death, and Resurrection.

While on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1996, our tour guide showed us the entrance gate into Jerusalem that Jesus used to enter the city, seated on a colt. The entrance gate was sealed shut. The reading of the Passion today gave us a mental picture of that glorious entrance into the city. People laid palm branches on the road ahead of Jesus as He rode a donkey into Jerusalem. The crowd was shouting "Hosanna" and other words of praise. Those same voices would quickly change from words of praise to words of condemnation a few days later.

Our pilgrimage group carried a huge wooden cross through the streets of Jerusalem on the path that traditionally was the path that Jesus took while carrying His cross to Calvary. We prayed as we made the Stations of the Cross.

The mystery we celebrate at Holy Week is not a memorial, re-enactment, or an anniversary celebration of the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord. Rather, the celebrations help us to participate now in our own time in what happened 2,000 years ago.

You and I become the people in the crowd. You and I become Pilate, the High Priest, King Herod. You and I become the men and women who meet Jesus on the way to the Cross. You and I are the good and bad thieves.

Now, you and I toss dice for Jesus' garments while He is hanging on the Cross. The hammer that drove the nails into Jesus' hands and feet is now in our hands. The words, "Crucify Him" are now on our lips. The words of the soldier at the foot of the Cross, "Truly this was the Son of God" are now our expression of faith.

From the use of palms this Sunday, to the wood of the Cross, to the glorious Resurrection, your participation and mine puts us in touch with the Easter Event in space and in time.

You and I are given the grace and opportunity by our participation in the Church's worship to experience firsthand what the Apostles, Mary and other disciples of Jesus had experienced at that first Easter.

Easter is an invitation to come and to follow the Suffering Christ and the Risen Lord Jesus. It is an invitation to experience His healing touch, to receive His forgiveness, to discover hope for our lives through Christ, to suffer with Him, to die with Him, and then to rise with Him.

We call this Holy Week because the Liturgies put us in touch with the holiness of God. As we celebrate the Liturgies, we receive grace that leads us into greater holiness of life.