

# SPIRITUAL LIFE

## Palm Sunday

By:

"I dread Good Friday this year," It was an honest and simple statement from the gentle woman sitting before me recounting her faith's journey. Yet she spoke not only for herself. She bore some weight we all carry when faced with the prospect of the Passion. How like Jesus himself, I thought. He desired to eat the meal but dreaded the thought of drinking the cup. When the awful time came, he was as clear and straightforward as the reluctant woman who feared Good Friday: "Father, if it is your will, take this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done." He tasted the anguish. He bled with worry. But as Isaiah foretold, this God-with-us would not turn back. He remained unshielded before the siege of life and death. Face set like flint, he clung only to the one who sent him. God, having made us in godly image, made God in Jesus the likeness of humankind.

The incarnation and its inevitable result would be a great emptying out into us. It would be the second fall: the fall of God into our human estate, a sublime bankruptcy with no golden parachute.

It is our human circumstance, grand and grotesque, that is at issue in the Passion. Our predicament is the healing of the wounds without the cover of cosmetics. Our problem is the solving of sin without endless stratagems of denial. "Not guilty," we all say, having taken the ploys of the courtroom as our method of life. We plea bargain our way through while the slaughter goes on. Lacerations we bear in quiet. Cruelties we have inflicted go unmentioned. Deprivations we share in common are unnoticed.

How could any human being ever live and escape the Passion? We would never rear children, never be born, never inhabit such a dear world fraught with peril, and we would probably never grow. Certainly we would never love. It is for us that Virgil mourned the "tears of things." Jesus said more: "Do not weep for me," he advised the women of Jerusalem, "weep for yourselves and for your children."

And so we do in our own passion. We weep for ourselves in abundance or deprivation. We weep for the children we never had and the children we have brought to birth. The tears are inescapable, no matter how hard we might try to pretend. No power or Pilate or pleasure of Herod can preserve us.

My friend who so dreaded Good Friday had it quite right. It is an inevitable, dreaded season of life. We die our thousand deaths. We pour out our hearts and tears for our young, mourn the lost beloved, the broken companion, the unraveling parent. We sweat the love and bleed the sorrow.

If only there were a way out.

But unexpectedly, wondrously, the one who need not have been like us, yet chose to be so, did not flee. He entered the garden of Gethsemane to rectify the garden of Eden. Not clinging to the robes of divinity, he took the towel to wash our feet. And we, with Peter, might murmur, "not just our feet, Lord, but our whole being, our pains and terror, our aging and fading, our agonies and death." C.S. Lewis wrote in his Poems that love was as warm as tears : unsettling, uninvited, cleansing, and comforting. It was fierce as fire, flickering with life, smoldering with rage, constant as some eternal flame. Love, too, was as fresh as spring, new and alive, daring and bold. But he ended this song of Love with the most telling stanza of all: Love's as hard as nails, love is nails Blunt, think, hammered through the medial nerves of One who, having made, knew the thing He had done, seeing (with all that is) our cross and His.

Perhaps it is that cross we dread. We'd rather go some day, bright, shining and unstained before the broken servant to thank Him for His pains, not for us, but for all those others out there who needed it. We would manage our salvation be our efforts and achievements. "Thank you, but, all the same, I'd rather not need such terrible proof of love."

But the dream of sinlessness sours to nightmare when we fail and fall. Having counted on flimsy virtue that cruelly betrays us, in our honor we conclude that we were not even worth the Passion and all is lost. The Pharisee who did not need salvation is joined by the failure who judges himself hopelessly beyond its power and grace. Good Fridays' wood, on which hung the Savior of the world, remains waiting for our kiss. It bore the one who says to us, now and eternally, from the cross" "Yes, you needed this. And yes, you were worth it."

## READINGS OF THE WEEK

Isaiah 50:4-7

Philippians 2:6-11

Luke 22:14-23:56

March 24, 2013

# 靈 修 生 活

## 聖 枝 主 日

白 正 龍 神 父

### 一、奉上主的名而來的君王，應受讚美

聖週的聖枝主日的禮儀分兩個部分：一是聖枝遊行，另一個部分則是感恩祭典，在這之中我們默想耶穌基督的受難史。

聖枝遊行前的讀經是採用路加福音第十九章二十八節至四十節，記載著耶穌榮進耶路撒冷，當時的群眾夾道相迎門徒們遂高聲頌揚天主說：「，應受讚頌！平安與榮耀歸於天上至高者！」

對觀福音中，瑪竇福音與馬爾谷福音所記載的是，群眾高呼：「賀三納於達味之子！因上主之名而來的，當受讚頌！賀三納於至高之天！」(瑪二一9；谷十一9。是引用舊約依五十7；耶七11。明顯地瑪竇與馬爾谷一方面把耶穌的榮進耶京之事，作為以民期待默西亞王朝來臨的記號，但也說明天主子民皆是天主的受傳者，皆為「因上主之名而來的受傳者，應光榮地進入聖城耶路撒冷----天主的國，並將天主國的榮耀歸於至高之天」。

而路加福音則以「奉上主名而來的君王，貼合在耶穌基督的身上，也正是把耶穌基督作為普世萬民的救主，而天主也正是一切萬有的萬有。更顯示人類的使命，即如何成為天主的肖像」。

因此，我們正可從耶穌榮進聖城之事，來了解我們的人生。路加整部福音，都是在敘述耶穌與祂的門徒走向耶路撒冷的路程。因而我們可以瞭解是，如同我們的人生一樣，也是一條要朝著人生的終極目標的生命旅程，進入聖城耶路撒冷--即新天新地--天上耶路撒冷--天主國的建立。如何能意識到，我們是天主的肖像，我們生在這世上，原本也就是天主的僕人--受傳者，為天主所派遣到世上來，猶如耶肋米亞先知論及他自己就說：「上主對我說：『我還沒有在母腹內形成你以前，我已認識了你；在你還沒有出離母胎以前，我已祝聖了你，選定了你作萬民的先知』(耶一4-5)，而印度詩哲泰戈爾也說，一個嬰兒的出生，表示天主對人沒有失望」(見詩集)。因此，我們人生的道路，就是要進入「耶路撒冷」，並賦與「耶路撒冷」生命，完成天主的受傳者的使命。基督今天就作了我們的典範而榮進耶路撒冷，而在今天的禮儀中，我們並不是夾道歡迎救主的群眾，我們是跟隨耶穌進入「耶路撒冷」的天主的受傳者。

### 二、死亡

禮儀的第二部分就是感恩祭典，是默想耶穌的受難史。耶路撒冷雖是聖城，也是天主國的預像，但也如舊約中的樂園(創二)，其中仍滿佈種種誘惑，如「知善惡樹的果子」。富有生命的天主國，正是一座政經與宗教的生活中心。耶路撒冷正具備如此的條件。也就因為如此，賢士們發現「救主」的誕生時，就立刻到耶路撒冷來尋找，而當時的耶路撒冷卻對這「新生的君王」，充滿著種種的陰謀(瑪二)。

今天耶穌進入了耶路撒冷，也發現這座聖城，已沾滿各種不潔--政治、經濟和宗教性的，特別是宗教性的不潔，連聖殿亦淪為「營利」的賊窩了(路十九45-48；谷十一15-17；瑪廿一12-13)。

試想，如果宗教也淪為物質追逐的目標，宗教事物也成為利益獲得的管道，那麼，人心就再無任何道德可言了。只要我們仔細看一看我們周遭的宗教現象，即可明白了。

因此，基督一進聖城，首要就是要淨化聖殿，使之能成為人們得聖化的殿宇。但這一切，都需要基督以「不把自己與天主同等的地位，把持不捨，反而空虛自己，而取了奴僕的形體，降生成人，與人相似。形態上完全與人一樣，自謙自卑，服從至死，且死在十字架上」(斐二6-8)。就這樣，祂給我們指出這麼一條淨化人生的道路。十字架上的祭獻，正是告訴我們，我們要建立天主的國，我們就必須將我們那屬於肉性的一切，與耶穌一起同釘在十字架上，同死，同埋葬，並以復活的耶穌的生命，在我們的生活中展現，也即那可巧，可死的一切，穿上不朽，不可死的生命。

摘自「教友生活週刊」