

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Palm Sunday

By: Fr. Mike Bayard, S.J.

On a cold, brittle, South Dakota December day, I stood before a newly shoveled grave that would eventually hold the body of a young woman who many of us taught at Red Cloud Indian School on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Standing and looking around, I was drawn into both the beauty of the land but also the starkness of that place. The land reflects the hardness and suffering of life out there – a knowledge of death deep down. Three weeks before Christmas when as a Church we were preparing for the coming of the light, we were gathered at this small Episcopalian Church on the prairie to remember the extinguishing of one light in this young woman named Tanya.

Standing huddled and trying to stay warm, Tanya's father approached me carrying three poinsettia plants to take home to the Jesuit community. I initially told him to keep these for himself. I wondered why he was giving me these when they were gifts to him. But, he insisted that I take these flowers and put them in our dining room. Later, reflecting on this exchange, I was deeply moved by his generosity in the mist of his grief of his daughter. Not even his grief in this death stopped him from reaching out and giving the gift. I could not help but think of Calvary. Jesus' gift of his very self in death to save humanity from the darkness of sin and death.

We gather in the starkness of this place to recall Jesus betrayal, rejection, denial, scourging, and his terrible agony of crucifixion. We gather to behold the wood on which Jesus. And, as we gaze on the cross, we ponder the words of the prophet Isaiah in our hearts, "Yet it was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured, while we thought of him as stricken, as one smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins; upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole, by his stripes we were healed." Jesus goes to his death embracing our death. He suffers and dies not for himself, but for our sinfulness and for our weakness. Jesus generously and freely gives us the gift of his very self because he loves us. Jesus gives his very self in death so as to cancel our deaths and transform them into new life. He desires so much for each one of us.

On this day each of us comes forward to stand before the cross in an awed silence, remembering that generous gift Jesus gave to each one of us – God's saving love and life for us.

Behold the wood of the cross on which is hung our salvation. O come let us adore.

These days coming upon us – as a Christian people – are difficult to face. We look forward to Easter yet know that to reach Easter means going through Holy week and re-encountering the sufferings of Jesus. Sometimes we can get it into our mind that, for Jesus, this trek into Jerusalem was easy for him [because he is God] or this was what was expected as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. Yet, even Jesus, who sometime in his ministry resolutely turned his face toward Jerusalem found these days troubling, knowing that he would have to eventually embrace his death but not without pleading three times with his Father: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will."

Yet even with this, and the constant rebuffing of religious officials, the denial of his friends, and even with his felt feeling at the end of God's abandonment, Jesus still faced his death, he still obediently embraced the call he received from the Father – that the way to life, freedom, is through this terrible death. And still he went to his death – embracing the hardships knowing that the Father was there and that the going through and overcoming the pain of the hardship would be glory of God. And, so, for Jesus, it was the call to remain faithful to that promise given so many years earlier to his forefathers – God had chosen his people, Israel, and that he promised to deliver them to freedom, to salvation.

And, so we too, are called this week to be with Jesus and not avoid the stark realities of this week. We are invited to be with Jesus in his rejection, with him when he is arrested, with him when his good friends denies their friendship and another one of his friends hand him over to the authorities. We are invited to be with him as he is condemned to death and as each nail his driven through his flesh into the cross.

This week let us stay with Jesus as he approaches the cross. Let us not deny these stark realities but in faith walk forward in uncertainty with the knowledge of the promise given to us, the promise we will hear over and over again in Easter, "Peace be with you, do not be afraid, I am with you."

Stay with me and watch with me and pray

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Isaiah 50:4-7

Philippians 2:6-11

Matthew 26:14-27:66

April 13, 2014

靈 修 生 活

耶 穌 受 難 時 的 三 種 人

鄒 保 祿 神 父

最近，本人買了一卷美國已故的福爾頓施恩主教錄影帶，其名為「聖週五」。施恩主教把耶穌受難時的人們分為三種，看完後，本人覺得很有意義，今與大家分享一下：

第一種人是漠不關心者，這種人可以般雀比拉多為代表，他曾向民眾說了七次：「耶穌是無罪的」，但是他仍然定了耶穌的死刑，他並沒有關心耶穌，而只重視自己的地位。

另一位是黑落德王，他想看一下耶穌基督，希望耶穌在自己面前顯些奇跡，以滿足自己的好奇心，但耶穌並不回答他。

第二種是憎惡耶穌的人，這些人是士兵，給耶穌穿紫紅袍，且給他戴茨冠，用蘆葦敲耶穌的頭，向他吐唾沫，屈膝朝拜他(谷十五 17-19)。此外尚有司祭長與經師們，他們是處死耶穌的主謀，在十字架下時，還譏笑耶穌說：「他救了別人，卻救不了自己……現在從十字架上下來吧！叫我們看了好相信他」(谷十五 31-32)。

與耶穌被釘在十字架上的左盜也笑他說：「你不是默西亞嗎？救救你自己和我們吧」(路廿二 39)。

在現代社會中，仍然有不少憎惡耶穌和教會的人。

最後一種是同情者，比拉多的妻子克羅弟亞對他說：「你千萬不要干涉那義人(耶穌)的事，因為我為他，今天在夢中受了許多苦」(瑪廿七 19)。克羅弟亞知道耶穌是一個好人，非常同情耶穌，希望自己丈夫能解救耶穌。

基勒乃人西滿很同情耶穌，幫助耶穌背十字架(路廿三 16)。他知道耶穌被人們陷害，在路中為他背負沉重的十字架。

傳說他的兩個兒子亞歷山大和魯福(谷十五 21)皈依教會後，曾當了兩個地方的主教。

此外，尚有一些婦女們沿路跟著耶穌，設法照顧祂。耶穌對他們說：「耶路撒冷的女子啊！你們不要哭我，但應該哭妳們自己及你們的子女」(路廿三 28)。

耶穌的意思是說，他們不必為自己痛哭，而是為那釘死祂的劊子手及陷害祂的人痛哭。

在教會的團體中，我們可以發現三種人。一種是對團體事情很冷淡，一切都莫不關心者。

另一種是專門反對團體成長的人，自己不但不做事，反而到處批評且破壞。

最後是主動且積極參與團體的人，他們全心地為團體服務。

朋友們！你(妳) 是那一種人呢？

摘自「公教報」

本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 四 年 四 月 十 三 日

依 50:4-7； 斐 2:6-11； 瑪 26:14-27:66