

Homily for Palm Sunday 2020

Dear friends, Today is passion Sunday also Palm Sunday. This is the only Sunday in the year when we have two gospels, one at the beginning of Mass and the other in its usual place.

This is the first time in your life and my life that Palm Sunday is celebrated without a procession, without people in attendance. Covid19 the virus has paralyzed not only Canada but the entire globe. There is a contrast between the two gospels; one is a story of welcome and the other is a story of rejection. When Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem at the beginning of the week he is welcomed by great crowds of people. A few days later, according to Matthew, all of the people, pressured by their religious leaders, call on Pilate to have Jesus crucified. Even though they are two very different stories Matthew makes a subtle connection between the two. According to our first gospel reading, when Jesus entered Jerusalem, 'the whole city was in turmoil'. Literally, 'the whole city shook'. At the moment Jesus died, according to Matthew, 'the earth shook'. Both the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem and the passion and death of Jesus are events which shake us out of our usual posture. According to the first Gospel reading, when Jesus entered Jerusalem and the whole city shook, people asked the question, 'Who is this?'. Their question is also our question, 'Who is this?' When Jesus died and the earth shook, this question received an answer from an unexpected quarter. Seeing the earth quaking and all that had taken place, the Roman centurion and the soldiers who were with him said, 'In truth this was God's Son'. Their confession is also our confession. This

group of pagans, according to Matthew, recognized God's presence in the death of Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, as we enter the Holy week , all churches will be closed, as well as all places of worship, and closed for a month at least.

So there will be no "washing of the feet "on Holy Thursday, no kissing of the cross on Good Friday, no baptisms on Easter Vigil.

And we are also told not to go out as far as possible, and only to go out for something essential.

So it is not just a quiet weekend ahead. We feel like we are grounded and have to stay at home.

But in such a chaotic and turbulent time, we are reminded of something that was of great significance in the Bible.

We are reminded of the night of the first Passover, when the Israelites who were under slavery in Egypt were told to stay indoors, to celebrate the Passover meal with the family, to have the doorpost of their homes marked with the blood of the Passover lamb.

As all these were happening behind closed doors, the angel of the Lord went through the land of Egypt and claimed the lives of the firstborn of the Egyptians, man and beast alike.

so while this "Stay-at-home" message is imposed upon us, let us also know that this is a time of grace and a blessing from God. This is the time for us to be with family and to be family.

This is the time for us to eat together and pray together.

We don't have to feel disconnected. We can log-in to the many online worship and prayer services.

Indeed this is the time of grace and blessing as we stay in and stay together as a community, and as family, and as the People of God in prayer and keeping the flame of hope burning in the darkness of these

times.

With every tribulation comes a revelation. God is revealing to us many things already. Let us seek Gods healing and peace in these difficult times. I wish everyone Blessed Holy week

stay safe,

Fr Jerome Mascarenhas ocd

Pastor