

MARCH 25, 2018



PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD



ISAIAH 58:4-7

PSALM 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24

PHILIPPIANS 2:6-11

MARK 14:1-15:47 OR 15:1-39

REFLECTION

An iconic 1970s TV show, ABC's *Wild World of Sports*, had a famous tagline in its introduction: "The thrill of victory and the agony of defeat." Palm Sunday begins as Jesus experiences the thrill of victory. He enters Jerusalem to shouts of "Hosanna in the highest" as the crowd waves palm branches in adulation. Do you know why Jesus gets this type of reception? Do you know what happened right before this? It's important to connect a few dots. In John's account of the Gospel Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead on the very day before he enters Jerusalem. This miracle is being celebrated when he enters the city. The community is celebrating that this Jesus could be the Messiah they're waiting for. Jesus says in Luke's account of the Gospel that even the stones would shout out if everyone else were silent. This was Jesus' most public "thrill of victory." In church, we celebrate this by hearing the Word, waving palm branches, and singing a joy-filled song at the beginning of the liturgy. Unfortunately, this victory is short-lived. The Palm Sunday liturgy takes a quick turn from Jesus' "thrill of victory" to his "agony of defeat." This agony of defeat is so strong that right before Jesus dies on the Cross, he cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (15:34).

ACTION

Does the Palm Sunday liturgy leave you unsettled? Do the words of Jesus' abandonment haunt you? Perhaps the very best action you can take this week is to attend the three great liturgies (the Triduum) on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil. Notice all the rituals: presentation of the sacred oils, the washing of the feet, the institution of the Eucharist, the Adoration of the Cross, lighting the Easter fire and candles, the Baptisms. This is the Church's most sacred week. Its message begins with Palm Sunday and Jesus' "thrill of victory" as he enters Jerusalem. It includes Jesus' "agony of defeat" as Jesus experiences his Passion. But recognize Christianity is not about the "agony of defeat." Jesus' Cross and suffering are real and painful, but it is not the end of the story.

JOURNALING QUESTIONS

- In what ways does your life relate to Jesus' "agony of defeat?"
- What questions does Jesus' suffering raise for you? Why do you think it is important to reflect on Jesus' suffering?