

REFLECTION – MARCH 24, 2018

PALM SUNDAY

When I was a child and we went to the movies (which wasn't very often because there wasn't a movie theater in Carrolltown where I grew up), but when we did go, one of the most engaging features for me was not the movie itself, but what went before it. No matter what the main feature was, it was preceded by a comic strip – you surely recall Bugs Bunny and Donald Duck and their friends. Then we were treated to a weekly newsreel. Remember, this was before television and 24-hr news cycles. Also, as kids we didn't read newspapers much, so this was the primary method for us to know what was happening in the world. Thus, the news reels were important and informative – at least I thought so. And I watched them intently.

I think of this as we live through the coming week wherein we follow the whole story of the Passion with all the events that were part of the Paschal mystery – from tomorrow (Palm Sunday) up to next Sunday when we hear of the culmination of the events in the Resurrection. However, there is one main difference to this experience when we follow the Passion and that of my youth when we watched the news of the Day presented so lifelike to us. The primary difference and a crucial one – we are not WITNESSES only to these events, we are PARTICIPATORS. We live with Jesus through each step he takes through all the liturgical celebrations this week. We recognize the significance in Jesus' life as part of the Salvation mystery, but it is just as important that we put ourselves into the drama and experience these events as they unfold in our own lives. Let me just offer a few suggestions for our reflection and contemplation as we walk through the coming days.

Tomorrow, Palm Sunday, we join the people in Jerusalem singing Hosannah and offering congratulations as we hope to see our deepest longing realized through this charismatic Man Jesus. We know that we too, have had opportunities when our friends, our students, our co-workers, lavish on us great praise, and would have us believe that we have done great work. We thrive on the acceptance and the adulation we receive at these times. However, we must know that success, in whatever form, can be very fleeting and is seldom due only to our own efforts. How many of our friends, our sisters, our family, through their own hard work and cooperation have enabled us to climb the heights. We must be able, like Jesus, to acknowledge the good, but not get lost in the trappings and forget the truth of it all – we only accomplish what we do through the grace of God, often bestowed on us through the blessings of others.

On Tuesday, we read the difficult account of the betrayal of Jesus. Judas, a trusted friend and confidant, is willing to sell out for a little gain for himself. How easy it is for us to be critical and judgmental of this traitor. How ungrateful can he be? Yet, we look at ourselves, at the times when we failed to follow through on important tasks because it was too tiring, too boring, or just too difficult? How many times have we let others down when they were depending on us? And even more, how often have we turned our back on another person needing us because they couldn't give us the reward that we wanted.

Holy Thursday is a day that we can truly celebrate our calling to community as we pray with Jesus around the table in the Upper Room. We rejoice in the communion we share as we extend to one another the bread that is life and the cup of joy and sorrow shared. We struggle

together to make the Word of the Gospel come alive in our personal and communal lives. We acknowledge the sacredness that is grace in each other as well as the challenge to live with weakness and frailty. We join Jesus who so unexpectedly placed a deliberate focus on unity as an act of service – washing their feet, even after the very vocal objection of Peter, “You will not wash MY feet”. We strive each day to wash the feet and serve in whatever way we can – with whomever it is who needs us at this moment.

The whole drama of the events leading up to the crucifixion – so vividly proclaimed in the Passion read aloud on Good Friday -- becomes for us the Way, drawing us into the living drama. We do not, obviously, compare our own pain and suffering to the ultimate torture experienced by Jesus on his way to Calvary. But we can unite the daily aches and pains, frustrations and challenges, unrealized dreams and multiple losses, disappointments and slights – all those pains that are a part of our daily lives, we can see these as our share, our Passion, which must be embraced in the same way that Jesus took the cross and advanced step by step without complaint. While we do not know the day or time of our last hour (little did Sr. Mary Edward and Raphael know last year at this time that theirs would be coming soon) – we can prepare for this moment by expressing from our heart each day the prayer of Jesus – “Into your hands, O God, I commend my spirit”.

And finally, the entombment of Holy Saturday – when we rest in the arms of God as we wait – for whenever – and however, the NEW LIFE will come. This period is part of the life of each one of us at this very moment and the Holy Saturday Vigil is our Vigil. It may be a few years, or months, or days, but the end will be the same for us all – hearing the

voice of the Lord inviting us to “Rise – and come” experience the Resurrection WITH ME.

This is our journey this week. We come to this time – not just to observe, to watch, to gaze at – but to enter fully and wholly into the events that we are privileged to share with the Saviour who accompanies us – one and all.

Michelle Farabaugh, OSB

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