

REFLECTION – 6TH SUNDAY OF LENT

Holy Week

Sometimes we read the Scriptures and try to discern the appropriate message. Other times we see them as a drama unfolding before our eyes. And yet, other instances, like today, we enter into them – as participants in the drama with Jesus. We realize the truth of this today we begin the holiest week of the liturgical year.

I have always thought that we don't really need to have reflections or homilies during this time – the liturgical celebrations are, themselves, teaching and reflection experiences and we need only to enter into them with our whole being. In that way we will come to know Christ in the depths of his love and sacrifice for each of us and for the whole world.

Having said that -- -- we don't need reflections at this time – I am going to offer a little of my own reflection. I would like to focus on each of the liturgical events of the coming week and suggest a personal experience that makes it my – and our – journey with Jesus as he moves from the streets of Jerusalem to the cross and eventually to the tomb.

First – Palm Sunday – We see Jesus carried in procession as the people praised him and cheered – Hosannah – to the Son of David – the highest accolade they could give him. Each of us has experienced times when we feel the praise and appreciation of others – some successful project, a classroom achievement, a committee assignment or leadership position desired. I think of when my Latin students won prizes in a national contest. It was their hard work and study – but I couldn't help but be very proud as their teacher. Or when a student, after many years, writes a letter or visits and says how much your teaching meant in preparing them for their future life. We all have these grace-filled periods when we experience success, when we basked in people's recognition of our achievements, for which we are grateful, when we, too, hear the Hosannahs, just as Jesus did riding through the public streets of Jerusalem. The temptation is to believe that all life will be joyous, that we will be praised and celebrated always – Hosannah to the King – or Queen. Hosannah in the highest.

But then comes Spy Wednesday – the day that we recount the betrayal of Judas, when he bargains to hand over Jesus to the High Priest, most likely leading to his death. Can we remember times when we have felt betrayed – when our friend left us behind, when someone else got the prize, the class, the gift that we felt should have been ours? We have certainly experienced times when we felt 'let down' by others, maybe even betrayed because we expected loyalty, friendship, or at least some recognition, but instead felt shunned by someone

we were counting on. Have we ever felt that someone else was rewarded for work that we actually did or that the “best seats” were given to other sisters and we were ignored. There are so many ways to feel betrayed or belittled –and no matter the circumstance, it is very difficult to deal with the suffering and continue to walk with fidelity and love. We have some sense of what Jesus must have felt like when Judas quietly left his side at the table to commit the ultimate act of betrayal.

Holy Thursday –the day when Jesus gathers at table with his closest followers to celebrate community by partaking of the basic elements of bread and wine. It was at The Supper, when their sharing and believing in one another culminated in the common meal, followed by Jesus who shockingly placed a deliberate focus on their unity by his act of service – washing their feet, even after the very vocal objection of Peter, “You will not wash MY feet”. The Last Supper is the physical expression and celebration of the communion developed among the Apostles during the period of Jesus’ public life. We, too, have periodic expressions of this communion that we have gradually developed during our years spent in the monastery. We come together for Feast days, Community days and meetings that allow us to share and support one another in large and small ways. The celebrations may be light and entertaining (like our Supper parties, our Easter Bonnet parade, or celebrating Sr. Christine’s birthday with Mike Clark. Or they may be serious and goal- oriented, as when we gather for discernment for elections, or to study seriously our community status during Visitation. But, whatever, the character of the sharing, the fact that we come together in face-to-face encounters, we are expressing the unity that is the essential of our life. Likewise, the importance of service, within and without the community, are integral to the unity that we share.

Good Friday – we are very aware of the individual events of the trial and torture with the Agony in the Garden, the scourging, the crowning with thorns, the ridicule thrown by the guards, the debasement by Pilate and the soldiers. And finally, the carrying of the cross, made familiar to us through the Way of the Cross. We listen to the recitation of the ongoing suffering every year as we proclaim the Passion Gospels. It is hard for us to compare ourselves with our suffering to the acute pain endured by Jesus – but in our journey of life, we do have multiple experiences in which we can identify with Jesus ongoing endurance of pain and suffering. Whether, it is physical pain – broken bones, chronic disease, cancer and other very painful medical conditions, or whether it is emotional pain – grief in the loss of a loved one, feeling humiliated, unappreciated, depressed, anxious, or any other of a myriad of painful conditions – we have multiple times when we can identify with the suffering of Jesus . Changes in our life situations – no longer being able to pursue ministry that has been very lifegiving for us, realizing that our physical bodies are deteriorating and won’t allow us to pursue activities that have always been invigorating for us, new circumstances that make us feel strange and unsure -- all these help us to know, in some degree, what it meant for Jesus to “take up the cross and

proceed to Calvary". Whatever the form of suffering, whatever and however, it comes to us, it is always a challenge for us to put our hands in the hands of Jesus, determining to persevere , showing a willingness to bearing our cross – to be faithful to the end, and even to be willing to give up our life for the good of others. We wish grow gradually into Christ's ultimate prayer – "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 lives of each one of us at this very moment and the Holy Saturday Vigil is our Vigil. It may be long or it may be short, but the end will be the same for us all – hearing the voice of the Lord inviting us to -- "Rise – come to the New Life " – experience the Resurrection WITH ME.

This is our journey this week. May we all be strengthened to enter fully and wholly into the events that we are privileged to share with the Savior who accompanies each and all.

Sister Michelle Farabaugh