

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion



Pope Francis addressed the world in light of a global pandemic and growing uncertainty, expressing the experience of what many of us go through as we find freedom from addictions and attachments:

"For weeks now it has been evening. Thick darkness has gathered over our squares, our streets and our cities; it has taken over our lives, filling everything with a deafening silence and a distressing void, that stops everything as it passes by; we feel it in the air, we notice in people's gestures, their glances give them away. We find ourselves afraid and lost. Like the disciples in the Gospel we were caught off guard by an unexpected, turbulent storm. We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other. On this boat... are all of us. Just like those disciples, who spoke anxiously with one voice, saying "We are perishing", so we too have realized that we cannot go on thinking of ourselves, but only together can we do this."

Having been through our own personal crises and feelings of impending doom, we can appreciate the need for each other and complete reliance on God. Recovery literature describes the beauty that remains when we overcome death and suffering together:

"We are people who normally would not mix. But there exists among us a fellowship, a friendliness, and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful. We are like the passengers of a great liner the moment after rescue from shipwreck when camaraderie, joyousness and democracy pervade the vessel from steerage to Captain's table. Unlike the feelings of the ship's passengers, however, our joy in escape from disaster does not subside as we go our individual ways. The feeling of having shared in a common peril is one element in the powerful cement which binds us. But that in itself would never have held us together as we are now joined.

The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action" (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 17).

As we anticipate Palm Sunday, we prepare ourselves to join Jesus as he makes the climb toward Calvary. Jesus' disciples are sent in service to prepare the way of his passion. In doing so, they show us how to participate in the Paschal Mystery in whatever way is put in front of us at the time. Sometimes, preparing a room or a meal is fulfilling our call as Christians.

When the meal ended, Jesus and his disciples moved onward. While he inviting Peter and others to stay awake in prayer, Jesus retreated on his own to pray:

*“My Father, if it is possible,
let this cup pass from me;
yet, not as I will, but as you will.”*

The humanity of Jesus is on full display as he cries out to the Father. We might find comfort in knowing that even the Son of God had to suffer and, at his lowest point, proclaimed, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" This raw expression might help us grasp the fullness of his self-sacrificial love and encourage us to do the same for others, even in the midst of hardship and uncertainty.

Perhaps we've found strength among the agony of our darkest hour while wishing away the cup of our addictions. We can make the same kind of humble surrender in matters big and small by praying, "Thy will, not mine, be done." It may need to be repeated often, but no set of circumstances are too small or too big to invite God into.

As we establish a strong foundation for our recovery during this season of Lent, let us adopt the concluding attitude and hope of Pope Francis:

"By his cross we have been saved in order to embrace hope and let it strengthen and sustain all measures and all possible avenues for helping us protect ourselves and others. Embracing the Lord in order to embrace hope: that is the strength of faith, which frees us from fear and gives us hope."

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- What hope are you holding onto today?
- How can you relate to the experience of being rescued after shipwreck? Describe.
- Share what is going on in your life today and tie it to a recovery principle or spiritual solution.

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Procession with Palms: Matthew 21:1-11

First Reading: Isaiah 50:4-7

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24

Second Reading: Phillipians 2:6-11

Gospel: Matthew 26:14–27:66