

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion: Redemptive Suffering

The restrictions due to the corona virus has prevented us from assembling for this year's Palm Sunday. But we never lose our vision of what Passion Sunday signifies to us. Two of the Gospels from the weekday Masses of the Fifth Week of Lent caught my attention. In one Gospel, Jesus condemns the religious leaders of the Jewish people for refusing to recognize the Messiah. The question that occurs to me is, "How could those who spent their lives in religion be able to miss Christ standing right in front of them?" I am convinced that they believed within their self-pride and arrogance that they had all the answers among themselves and within themselves. We too, can easily make this mistake ourselves. God's Presence in the world is far greater than we could ever imagine. His Power is deeper than we could ever achieve ourselves. Wrapped up in themselves, the Jewish leaders missed the Power and Presence of the Lord. If we are wrapped up into ourselves, we will also miss His Presence. The second Gospel from this week that touched me contained Jesus' proclamation that when He is lifted up, He would draw all people to Himself. The suffering of our Lord was necessary for all people. Christianity is not just a belief system for a selected group of people. All people are saved by Jesus Christ, even good people searching for God, who are yet to become Christian. By dying on the cross, Jesus re-established mankind's ability to be united to God. Jesus' death gives all people spiritual life. This is what the Church means when uses the term: ***redemptive suffering***. In the mystery of the Redemptive Suffering of the Lord, we participate in the cross of Christ. St Paul writes in his Letter to the Colossians: "In

my body, I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of His Body, which is the Church.” We all are. We all are making up for what is lacking. But how can there be a deficiency in Christ’s sacrifice? The answer is this: we are entrusted with the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. The only way we can do this is by living the Life of Christ. We make Christ real in the world. Our living His Life includes our embracing His Sacrifice. We unite our pains and sorrows to the Lord as our part in making the presence of the Suffering Saviour real in the world. I wish I could tell you that pain and hurt do not exist and that you can make it go away with your mind. The pandemic of corona virus has certainly reminded us of our human condition. Suffering is part of our lives. However, there is profound value in every aspect of our Christian’s life, including pain. Therefore, we give it all to the Lord. We surrender everything: our joy and pain. Good health and poor health. Let me ask you this, “Have you ever met a truly holy person?” or read about the life of Mary Mackillop or Mother Theresa of Calcutta? They are two very prominent Saints in our era. If you have, and I am sure we all have, we cannot help but realize that for that person pain is secondary. The only thing that matters for him or her is Christ. Moreover, his or her very suffering provides us with the experience of Christ’s Redemptive Presence. He or she is making up for what is lacking in the Cross of Christ: the participation of His people. We focus on the cross today, and throughout this coming Holy Week. We unite our pain to Jesus’ pain. We receive His healing through His Cross. I urge you all never to give up on Prayer. We are called to participate in Redemptive Suffering.