

Palm Sunday, March 29, 2015
Rev. Diane Monti-Catania

Palm Sunday Reflection

Today is an interesting day in the life of the church.

It is the day when we celebrate the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.

We want to linger there, to bask in the recognition that after three years, the crowds finally realize the greatness of Jesus.

We feel joy that Hosannas are finally being sung.

If only this were the end of the story.

We, however, know that this is not the end of the story.

Hence the profound tension in Palm Sunday.

We have a brief but haunting burst of sunshine as Jesus is surrounded by the crowds, waving palm branches and songs of praise to God.

Yet the storm clouds are quickly gathering.

There's a brooding sense of impending tragedy as Jesus stops his descent from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem and weeps.

Indeed there is something both gloriously joyful and awesomely bitter about this day.

Today we are looking into the mystery of the heart of God.

Today we witness how God holds infinite sorrow and infinite joy together.

Today we acknowledge that Jesus was first lauded with glory and honor and then betrayed, and then crucified.

Next week we will gather to celebrate with joy that our Savior has conquered death and risen from the tomb.

But today, while we started with joy – we will end with sorrow- just as the disciples did.

We will journey with Jesus through his Passion – through Holy Week.

This is the foundational story of our faith.

We are going to read the passion narrative – which we will revisit again Thursday night and Friday – but I want each of you to have the story in your heart as you travel through Holy Week.

I want this to be a week when you remember the human potential to turn away from God.

I want this to be a week when you meditate on what it means that Jesus was willing to suffer and die for you.

I want this to be a week – a holy week – when you feel so close to God that it makes you weep.

I want this to be a week that you pray for the joy of Easter to cleanse your heart and make all things new. Amen.

Hear ends the reading of God's holy word. May he add to our hearing and understanding, his blessing. Amen.

Let us pray.

Compassionate God, your love finds full expression in the gift of Jesus Christ your Son, who willingly met betrayal and death to set us free from sin.

Give us courage to live obediently in these days until we greet the glory of our risen Savior.

Help us to remember that from the darkness comes great light.

Help us to write Christ's story upon our hearts, to carry it in our very being.

Awaken in us the awareness that all things can be made new – that you bestow the gift of transformation, the gift of life.

Oh God, as we enter into this holy week grant us the grace to be holy.

Help us to turn our hearts to you, seeking understanding and peace.

Hear our prayers this day for those whom we love.

For those who are sick we pray that your healing touch be upon each one.

We pray for those who grieve, that they might become an Easter people – reborn and rejuvenated by your abundant love.

We pray for our leaders throughout the world – that they will work for peace and understanding.

We pray for our brothers and sisters who suffer from lack of food or shelter. Help us to bring healing and help to all the corners of the earth.

We turn to you now, in the sacred stillness of this Meetinghouse, and ask that you hear the prayers of our hearts...

Jesus taught them to pray in these words....Our Father.