

Palm Sunday: Cycle B: 2021: Is 50:4-7; Ps. 22; Phil 2:6-11; Mk: 15:1-39 (Short Form)

***“Has God abandoned us?”***

The last year had been challenging to say the least. What a blessing to be able to celebrate Holy Week publicly this year as last year the Churches were sadly closed because of the beginning the CV pandemic and all the fears of the unknown that went along with that. This Holy week we are back up and running, thankfully, but taking necessary precautions. What can the readings for Palm Sunday teach us in this challenging time?

1. The first thing to remember is **why** Jesus went through what he did in terms of suffering and death; He did it to give us the chance to once again live in full communion with God, beginning in this life and coming to the fullness of that gift in Heaven. All this was prepared by the Blessed Trinity for centuries, going back to the Prophet Isaiah in the “suffering servant” passages of which we hear a part today in the 1<sup>st</sup> reading. Amazingly it was written some 700 years before Jesus was on earth; it truly shows how God is beyond time and space, and how He works for the long term goal of saving the human race. Always trust the Lord knows what He is doing - *even when He permits suffering to occur in our individual lives or collectively with this pandemic which is both a spiritual chastisement for sin but also an opportunity to turn to Him in humility and holy dependence, so He can get us through it and mature us spiritually in the process.*
2. Then we hear from St. Paul the beautiful Philippians hymn on **the reality of Jesus’s true nature as God and man** for the sake of our salvation. What unbelievable humility Jesus embraces in taking on our humanity, even though He was a divine person, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Blessed Trinity. If Jesus was willing to humble Himself in such a way out of love for us humans, how much do we need to humble ourselves in return for the love of God and neighbor, always in a spirit of gratitude? Let’s pray the Lord helps us to do so ever more profoundly.
3. Finally in the Passion narrative, I would like to draw attention to **3 responses.** The first two which are not good and the third is showing us the narrow path to salvation. First the response of **Pontius Pilate** who knew Jesus was innocent but

didn't have the courage to stand up for that conviction but bowed to the crowd in a spirit of cowardice. Do we do the same sometimes? **Now more than ever is a time that we need to stand up for the truth of our Catholic faith both in private and public life.** Then the 2<sup>nd</sup> response you have **the crowd** there at the Cross who for the most part mocked Jesus. Sadly most of the crowd today in the sense of the masses of humanity either ignore Jesus or mock Him. It's the bitter fruit of a lack of Faith in their hearts, minds and wills. What are we doing to counter this mockery and indifference by the masses? *Are we willing to pray more, suffer more in quiet love, and offer ourselves as a living sacrifice (see Romans 12:1-2) unto the Lord for the salvation of souls in union with Jesus in company with Mary and Joseph and all the good angels and saints for the salvation of souls?* Now is a particularly dire time in that regard. Which leads to the 3<sup>rd</sup> response that of Jesus on the Cross, which is the psalm response today, *My God, my God why have you forsaken/abandoned me?* Do we sometimes think God has abandoned us? That He has turned the wicked world fully over to the power of the devil and his fellow fallen angels? No that is not the case – even if it seems on the surface sometimes that it is. God is working powerfully, often behind the scenes to effect real spiritual change in people's souls. I've been hearing it in Confession in recent months. More and more people are seeing that this pandemic is a spiritual wake up call for the human race as a whole and for individual souls. The collective part is lagging behind the individual response which is often the case in salvation history. *When we feel abandoned by God in our emotional state of being, let's cry out with Jesus to the Father in the Holy Spirit because that sense of abandonment is a passing purification of soul which leads to greater trust and dependence on the Lord and helps us see things more and more from God's perspective which is the only perspective that will ultimately lead to peace and in the end salvation, for our own soul and hopefully helping to save other souls in union with Jesus.* That needs to be our sacred mission right now as we go thru this pandemic and the necessary spiritual purification leading to salvation in Jesus thru His holy Passion. *For the sake of His sorrowful passion have mercy on us and on the whole world!* God bless you.