

Sunday April 10, 2022
Palm Sunday
Parishioner Reflection
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Gospel reflection -
Luke 22:14 - 23:56

In today's gospel reading, we find ourselves with Jesus and his disciples in his last hours. It is Passover; unlike any previous or to follow. The drama of the past week continues. Events will move quickly now, and in ways that none of his followers could have imagined. Jesus' drama was not just their drama. It is our drama too.

As Jesus enters the last evening before his death, we are taken with him, as we are each Easter. This is not just an event set in history. We participate in his life, death and resurrection as it happens to us and for us, even today.

His entry into Jerusalem a week earlier had been charged with energy and enthusiasm. The crowd had lined the streets waving palms and placing their clothes on the ground before him as they shouted his name as though he was a Roman conqueror returning from battle.

Yet, the sentiment of the crowd was about to turn on Jesus. Those who had greeted him with enthusiasm days earlier will tomorrow demand his death. Even his closest friends will betray and deny him, while others will run for safety out of fear. He soon will find himself abandoned and alone.

Who do you and I identify with as this drama unfolds? Am I like Judas in any way? When have I betrayed others or Jesus? Have I been ashamed of knowing or afraid of being associated with him, as Peter was?

Am I like Pilate, who acted out of self-interest, using Jesus for his own gain? Or like Simon or Veronica who helped Jesus in his time of need? Am I like some disciples in the garden of Gethsemane, too distracted or exhausted to pray? It's in the garden that I have imagined myself these past few days.

Before leaving his disciples to pray, Jesus instructs them to pray that you may not enter into temptation. Would I have followed his instructions, I wonder? We watch Jesus as he returned to pray to his Heavenly Father, as was his custom. In spite of what lay before him, Jesus prays. In agony, he prays. An angel visits him - in answer to his prayer - to strengthen him.

Strengthened, Jesus returned to the disciples. Prayer had not become their custom, it seems. They had not followed his instruction. Instead, sorrow had overcome and exhausted them. Sleep would not rejuvenate or fortify them. He wakes them. A second time, he exhorts them to...pray that you may not enter into temptation. Why was it so important to Jesus that his disciples pray, I wonder? Temptation threatened them, yet its danger is not apparent to them. Through prayer, surrender to our heavenly Father occurs. We watch Jesus grapple with surrender. In prayer, strength is received to return to others, and pass on what we have received. We witness this too in Jesus. Is prayer my custom or yours? What do you understand Jesus' command to pray that you may not enter into temptation to mean?

As we walk with Jesus through this Holy Week, taking time to reflect on his passion, perhaps this will give an opportunity to revisit once again Jesus' call to pray that we may not enter temptation.