

A decorative graphic on the left side of the page features several palm fronds in shades of gray. A central white rectangular box with a gray border contains the text "PALM SUNDAY" in large, bold, gray capital letters, and "HOSANNA TO THE KING" in smaller, gray capital letters below it.

Father Ed's Homily

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

Theme: JESUS' PASSION GIVES US HOPE AND A MEANINGFUL PURPOSE IN OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE

Today, we at Holy Rosary Parish join parishes around the world to commemorate the Palm Sunday of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Passion Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week, the most Solemn Week in the Church's year. On this day, the Holy Mother Church recalls the entrance of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem to complete his Paschal Mystery, namely: to suffer, to die, and rise again. This celebration reminds us that Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection belong together, inseparable.

Jesus' passion narrative is found in all the four Gospels with some few different memories of the tragedy. For instance, in Matthew and Mark, Jesus' last words are: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34. Luke's passion account recorded that on the Cross, Jesus promised the repentant criminal, he would be with him in Paradise. Jesus then said, "Father, into your hands, I commend my spirit" LK 23:46. But it is only St. John's Gospel that gives us more details on the palm branches that made this Sunday known as Palm Sunday.

Since we are in the Year of St. Mark, the Passion narrative we have just heard was taken from the Gospel of Mark. His passion account identifies Jesus as the Messiah, places his death within the context of Jewish Passover, and highlights Jesus' self-sacrifice. Mark wants his early Christian community and future Christians to see Jesus' passion as the climax of Jesus' earthly ministry.

Reading and meditating on the Passion narrative helps us to be grateful to Jesus Christ for his unconditional love for us. His Paschal Mystery gives us hope and meaningful purpose not to give up as we journey with him and eventually be with him eternally in heaven. Let us not forget that what Jesus went through on this earth awaits each one of his faithful disciples.

Beloved, let us always remember that Jesus did not die to save us from suffering. He died to teach us how to suffer and die like him so that one day, he will raise our mortal bodies to be with him in heaven. This explains why Jesus says anyone who wants to be his disciple must deny himself/herself, carry his/her cross and follow him. It is unfortunate we live in a world that does not see any meaningful purpose in suffering.

To follow Jesus faithfully, we must have one of the virtues St. Paul mentioned in the second reading, namely humility. Even though Jesus is God, he never counts equality with God, his Father. As you may be aware, this reading is considered Christ's hymn that the early Christians used in Church services. It describes our Lord Jesus' utmost humiliation which ended up on the Cross but led to his glorification. Through his obedience to his heavenly Father, Jesus was able to make up for our sinful disobedience. This hymn also praises/sings Jesus' exaltation by the Father.

During this Holy Week, the Church invites us to meditate on Jesus' passion which will be for us our source of our Christian hope that will always give us meaningful purpose in life.

In the first reading, taken from what is known as the 3rd Song of the Servant of Yahweh, we hear the passion account of a suffering servant/prophet, an ideal Servant of God, who like a well-trained disciple, he did not refuse to continue his divine vocation. He was able to accomplish his mission because of his profound faith in God, who he believed would never abandon him. The questions most Biblical scholars post: is he referring to a king of the past or the Messiah (anointed King) to come or a collective person, Israel? The early Christian community applied this reading to Jesus Christ. For them, the Prophet Isaiah was referring to Jesus, the ideal Servant of God, the Messiah.

As we meditate and pray with these readings of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, these readings help us to understand and appreciate Jesus's suffering, death, and resurrection. Again, let us remember, we will also go through what Jesus went through if only we remain faithful to Jesus. Let us remember that Jesus' passion will always give us hope and meaningful purpose in our Christian life. It is through suffering and dying with him each day, that he would raise us up one day to himself in heaven.

Again, please do not hesitate to call the Parish office if you need any assistance to help you during this Holy Week to have a grace-filled Easter.

God bless,

Fr. Edward Tetteh, SVD