

## **The Palm Sunday of The Passion of Our Lord. Readings Year C: Is 50:4-7, Phil 2:6-11 & LK 23:1-49**

**Theme: "FATHER, FORGIVE THEM, THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO"**

Today, our Holy Rosary Parish community joins the entire Christian community throughout the world to commemorate the Palm Sunday of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. As you might have read in the Procession Rite of today's Liturgy, we recall Jesus Christ's triumphal entry into his own city of Jerusalem to accomplish his Paschal Mystery, namely, to suffer, to die, and be raised on the third day. With the celebration of the Passion of Our Lord, we have started our Holy Week that leads to Easter.

Our first reading, taken from what is popularly known as the Third Song of the Servant of Yahweh, the prophet Isaiah describes an ideal Servant of God. This Servant of God, like a well-trained disciple, does not refuse divine vocation, meaning, a call to serve God and His people. These are some questions posed by many Biblical scholars/theologians: is the prophet Isaiah referring to a collective person, namely, Israel, God's people, or referring to a king of the past? Or is he referring to the Messiah, the anointed King who is to come? Reflecting on this reading, the early Christian community saw it as a reference to Jesus Christ. For them and all of us today, we consider this prophecy of Isaiah as fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

Meditating on these readings of this Palm Sunday, one would agree with the early Christians that the Third Song of the Servant of Yahweh is describing what awaited our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the second reading, which is taken from St. Paul's letter to the Philippians, Paul describes the humiliation, suffering, and the obedience Jesus must go through which would lead to his exaltation. In other words, Jesus must first experience Good Friday to experience the glorious Easter Sunday. It also means, as his followers, we must also go through humiliation, suffering, and obedience for him to reward us with the crown of salvation he promised to those who are faithful to him and his mission.

Reading and meditating on the narrative of the Passion of our Lord Jesus that was just proclaimed to us, we heard the humiliation, suffering, and obedience Jesus had to go through to achieve his heavenly Father's mission.

Reflecting on this Passion account, Jesus offered several prayers, but two of them really inspire me a lot. The first prayer was in Mount Olives (Garden of Gethsemane): "FATHER, IF YOU ARE WILLING, TAKE THIS CUP AWAY FROM ME; STILL, NOT MY WILL BUT YOURS BE DONE." In this prayer, for me, Jesus is reminding us always to pray for God's will be done for us, not our own will. This prayer reminds us again of the Lord's Prayer. We can only find meaning and purpose in our life if God's will be done in our life and not our own will.

The second prayer was on the Cross: "FATHER, FORGIVE THEM, THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO." We know from Scripture that Jesus went through the most painful and shameful death on the Cross. He was beaten and mocked by the soldiers, scribes, abandoned by disciples, bled from the crown of thorns, and carried a heavy cross to a place called the Skull (Golgotha) where he was nailed to the cross to die. All these were done to him by people he taught, fed, healed, etc. Yet, Jesus prayed and forgave them all. We must all endeavor to follow his footsteps if we want to share his glory in heaven with him.

During this Holy Week, let us examine our life and see if there are people that we must forgive and forget so that we can truly celebrate this Easter. Also let us all learn to accept Jesus' forgiveness and be able to forgive ourselves. If you do this, you will not only celebrate Easter with joy and peace of mind but will be a model of Jesus' Forgiveness to our world. Many experts on Forgiveness agree that the offended is the primary beneficiary of forgiveness. So, remember, when you forgive someone, you are doing service not only to the offender but to yourself also. You benefit first, and the offender is a secondary beneficiary of your forgiveness. So, it is true that if you forgive and forget the pain/hurt, you will have spiritual, emotional, and psychological benefits to your wellbeing.

As I always conclude my homily, may our Holy Mother Mary and her beloved husband, St. Joseph, continue to pray for us that, like their beloved Son, Jesus Christ, we can also forgive and forget our pains/hurts so that we will be true followers of him. Amen! Have a blessed Holy Week!