

Dear Parishioners,

As we begin Holy Week with Palm Sunday, we enter into the most solemn and significant time of the liturgical year. As we recall this Sunday, usually we receive blest palms, hear the gospel of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem to the cheering of the crowds, then in the gospel of the Passion, marvel at Judas asking what the chief priests will give him for the life of his supposed friend, Jesus. The power of these gospel readings is almost overwhelming.

The second reading, Paul's letter to the Philippians 2.6-11, also gives us much to reflect upon:

“He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. “

When we try to understand this, we are confronted with mystery. This is the same Jesus, the Son of God, who washes the feet of his disciples, the task of a slave in an upper-class family. He is the same one who touches and heals the sick, considered punished by God for something they themselves or a family member had done, yet he repeatedly goes against the formalities of the law by healing them on the Sabbath! If that isn't enough, he calls Matthew, a hated tax collector hired by the Roman occupiers, to be his disciple. He won't take the seat of honor at a banquet and tells his followers to do the same. He constantly puts love of God and love of neighbor ahead of a thoughtless obedience to the law.

When the crowds following Jesus enter Jerusalem, the people of the city ask them, “Who is this?” And the crowd replies, “This is Jesus the prophet, from Nazareth in Galilee.” This question is one we might ask ourselves: Who is this Jesus for me? Has my relationship with him and those he has put in my life grown as these last days of Lent approach? In this strange moment, with people throughout the world becoming ill and dying with the coronavirus, how does my faith guide me? Whether or not they are explicitly religious, we witness the medical workers, first responders and grocery store clerks put themselves in grave danger as they continue to love their neighbor as well as complete strangers.

May our gracious God be with them, with all who are struggling emotionally or financially and with those who have died and their families.

May the Holy Spirit guide us and watch over the whole human family.

Sheral