

~ *Our Pastor's Message* ~

Greetings,

We celebrate Palm Sunday this year without our usual gathering, blessing of palms, and simple procession. We celebrate with concern for what lies ahead much like Jesus may have felt as he entered the holy city Jerusalem. For Jesus, determined to follow through on his Father's will, knew he would enter the city, be arrested, persecuted, judged unjustly, and be crucified before he could defeat the powers of evil and rise to new life. These forebodings were in the front of his mind. We, too, must remember with hope the promise that no matter what lies ahead, Jesus has defeated the powers of evil and reigns victorious through his resurrection. Jesus is our savior and will never abandon any of us.

Looking over our world today, seeing this common element that threatens every man, woman, and child, regardless of race, country of origin, or belief, I see our shared humanity. I see our shared image in the likeness of God in Jesus. I see our shared struggles to stay healthy and to live through this threat of evil. So many people ask me, what is God trying to tell us? There is of course no easy or simple answer to this question. I believe that Jesus is telling us through this current worldwide crisis what he has always told us: that we are all vulnerable human beings but that we are loved. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are telling us that we are all united by our humanity and linked to God as children are linked to their parents. They are telling us that we should care for each other, forgive each other, and love each other as Jesus loves, cares for, and forgives us. God is reminding us to turn to Jesus in times of trouble that we might trust in God's goodness.

Likewise, we are being challenged to turn away from false gods that can do nothing to save us. Putting our trust in our gold or silver idols, in our status or ranking in society, in our gifts and talents will not save us, only God has the power to save.

When the Israelites wondered in the desert for 40 years they grumbled for food and water, they grumbled about being lost, they fantasized about how good they had it during their captivity in Egypt, and thus turned their thoughts away from God. But over and over again, God forgave them and feed them with good food and fresh water. Jesus continues to love and feed us because God is good all the time, all the time God is good.

Peace and God's blessing,

Warren J. Broussard, SJ
Fr. Warren J. Broussard, SJ, Pastor

P.S. We will have blessed palms when life is normal, meanwhile hold on to your old palms. God's blessings never grow out of date!

BREAD & BLESSINGS HOMELESS MEAL MINISTRY

The coronavirus (COVID 19) crisis has forced many of us to rethink or change the way(s) in which we conduct our daily activities. In order for our guests and volunteers to stay safe, we had to convert from serving a hot Sunday meal to distributing sack lunches. This Grab-and-Go method has worked out well. For fast and easy pick up the sack lunches and bottled water are placed on tables just below the parish basement stairs. Barriers are set up so as not to allow anyone to further enter the building. It takes a minute or so to pick up a sack or two. To stay in compliance with the six feet social distance no lines are permitted to form outside the building. Three (3) volunteers have been able to successfully manage the distribution.

This last Sunday over 200 sack lunches were picked up, while some took one sack many took multiple sacks. The feedback from these recipients is one of gratitude and appreciation.

We are thankful for the many who have reached out to help, either with sack lunches or monetary donations.

The United Church of Christ has been providing sack lunches to our B&B ministry for approximately six (6) years. They are now preparing seventy five (75) sack lunches every Sunday and are willing to prepare a larger number if needed. The Prince of Peace parishioners and the Quo Vadis young adult group also provided seventy five (75) sack lunches this Sunday and will continue to prepare sack lunches on a weekly basis. Several ICC parishioners are now providing sack lunches and bottled water. In so many ways this is a difficult time for the citizens of this world, especially those going without the necessities. The hunger pain is real; not knowing when and if food will be available can be frightening. Here at Immaculate Conception Parish as we reach out to our hungry brothers and sisters with sack lunches, our Gracious Lord will bless our efforts.

As St John Paul II told us: "Those who sincerely say, 'Jesus I trust in you' will find comfort in all their anxieties and fears."

Roberta Montoya, Coordinator
Bread & Blessings Ministry

**APOSTLESHIP
OF PRAYER**
The Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network
UNITED STATES



For April the Pope's Intention is **FREEDOM FROM ADDICTION**: We pray that those suffering from addiction may be helped and accompanied.

SUNDAY CONNECTION FROM LOYOLA PRESS

The Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion ~ April 5
Gospel at the Procession with Palms: Matthew 21: 1-11
 Jesus enters Jerusalem as the crowd waves palm branches and shouts, "Hosanna!"

First Reading: Isaiah 50: 4-7; The Lord's Servant will stand firm, even when persecuted.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 22: 8-9, 17-20, 23-24
 A cry for help to the Lord in the face of evildoers

Second Reading: Philippians 2: 6-11: Christ was obedient even to death, and God has exalted him.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 26: 14—27: 66

Jesus is crucified, and his body is placed in the tomb.

Background on the Gospel Reading: Today we begin Holy Week, the days during which we journey with Jesus on his way of the cross and anticipate his Resurrection on Easter. Today's liturgy begins with the procession with palms to remind us of Jesus' triumphant entrance into Jerusalem.

The events of Jesus' Passion are proclaimed in their entirety in today's Liturgy of the Word. Those events will be proclaimed again when we celebrate the liturgies of the Triduum—Holy Thursday's Mass of the Lord's Supper, the Good Friday of the Lord's Passion, and the Easter Vigil. In communities that celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation with catechumens, these liturgies take on special importance because they invite the catechumens and the community to enter together into the central mysteries of our faith. These days are indeed profound and holy.

In Cycle A, we read the Passion of Jesus as found in the Gospel of Matthew on Palm, or Passion, Sunday. (On Good Friday, we will read the Passion of Jesus from the Gospel of John). The story of Jesus' Passion and death in Matthew's Gospel focuses particularly on the obedience of Jesus to the will of his Father. As Jesus sends his disciples to prepare for Passover, he indicates that the events to come are the will of the Father (Matthew 26:18). In Jesus' prayer in the garden, he prays three times to the Father to take away the cup of suffering, but each time, Jesus concludes by affirming his obedience to the Father's will (Matthew 26:39-44). Even Matthew's description of Jesus' death shows Jesus' obedience to the Father.

Another theme of Matthew's Gospel is to show Jesus as the fulfillment of Scripture. Throughout the Passion narrative, Matthew cites and alludes to Scripture to show that the events of Jesus' Passion and death are in accordance with all that was foretold. And if the events were foretold, then God is in control. In addition, Matthew is particularly concerned that the reader does not miss the fact that Jesus is the Suffering Servant of the Old Testament. Jesus acts in obedience to the Father even in death, so that sins may be forgiven.

Matthew makes this clear in the story of the Lord's Supper. As Jesus blesses the chalice, he says: "... for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins." (Matthew 26:28) While the Gospels of Matthew and Mark have many parallels in their narrative of the Passion, there are a few details worth noting that are unique to Matthew. Only Matthew indicates the price paid to Judas for betraying Jesus. The story of Judas's death is also found only in Matthew, as is the detail that Pilate's wife received a warning in a dream and that Pilate washed his hands of Jesus' death. Finally, Matthew's Gospel alone mentions the earthquakes and other phenomena that happened after Jesus' death.



Matthew places the responsibility for Jesus' death on the Sanhedrin, the chief priests and elders who were responsible for the Temple. However, the animosity that those Jewish

leaders and the Jewish people demonstrate toward Jesus is not to be interpreted in ways that blame the Jewish people for Jesus' death. Throughout Matthew's Gospel, the narrative reflects the tension that probably existed between the early Christian community and their Jewish contemporaries. At the 2nd Vatican Council, the Council Fathers made clear that all sinners share responsibility for the suffering and death of Jesus and that it is wrong to place blame for Jesus' Passion on the Jewish contemporaries of Jesus or on Jewish people today. There are many vantage points from which to engage in Jesus' Passion. In the characters of Matthew's Gospel, we find reflections of ourselves and the many ways in which we sometimes respond to Jesus. Sometimes we are like Judas, who betrays Jesus and comes to regret it. We are sometimes like Peter, who denies him, or like the disciples, who fell asleep during Jesus' darkest hour but then act rashly and violently at his arrest. Sometimes we are like Simon, who is pressed into service to help Jesus carry his cross. Sometimes we are like the leaders who fear Jesus or like Pontius Pilate, who washed his hands of the whole affair. Jesus dies so that our sins will be forgiven.

The events of Jesus' Passion, death, and Resurrection are called the Paschal Mystery. No amount of study will exhaust or explain the depth of love that Jesus showed in offering this sacrifice for us. After we have examined and studied the stories we have received about these events, we are left with one final task—to meditate on these events and on the forgiveness that Jesus' obedience won for us.

Editor's Note: I will provide commentary for Holy Thursday, Good Friday, the Easter Vigil, and Easter Sunday. They will be posted to our website by Wednesday, April 8.