

HOMILY: PALM SUNDAY—APRIL 9, 2017

Today is Passion Sunday. And the readings invite us to look at the question of suffering with a focus on Jesus' suffering and death.

The first reading describes how the suffering servant accepted the role of suffering which the father had chosen for him.

The servant was to preach the message of God's mercy to the people. Many would reject and torture him, but God was on his side and he would not be moved from his firm purpose by their insults and injuries.

The servant suffered as the result of his fidelity to the message he had received from God to his people.

The first reading contains a description in which it is possible, in certain sense, to identify the stages of Christ's passion in their various details in the gospel: the arrest, the humiliation, the blows, the spitting, the unjust sentence, scourging, and the crowing with thorns.

The second reading is an interpretation of the suffering and the death of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the divine redeemer who emptied himself of his divine glory.

The mission of the only-begotten son consists in conquering sin, suffering and death. He conquers sin and suffering by his obedience unto death and he overcomes death by his resurrection.

Suffering accompanies us at every point on earth. We cannot live as human beings without going through some level of suffering.

With the passion of Christ all human suffering has found itself in a new situation. In the cross of Christ not only is the redemption accomplished through suffering, but also human suffering has been redeemed. Christ has put it to the best advantage.

The victory of Christ over sin and death has thrown a new light upon every suffering.

That is, the sufferings and death of our divine Lord in his humanity are our source of strength and encouragement in our daily struggles against the evil one and whatever prevents our spiritual progress.

When we are tried by temptations, when we are tested by sickness, worried about death of dear ones and no matter how rough life is let us remember that we have the example before our eyes, the example of our true brother Jesus Christ. He is with us every day, close beside us, to encourage and help us on the way.

The point is, like Jesus, who offered his suffering as an act of praise and in dying entrusted himself to the Father let us continue to profess our faith in God even if human fears cause us to say: "**My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?**" Let us live in the conviction that suffering we undergo is not a sign of God's abandonment. Let us accept them and deal with them trusting that in the end we shall not be put to shame.

May our celebration of the passion, death and the resurrection of the Lord help us to live in right relationship to God even in the face of suffering.