

PALM SUNDAY: HOMILY

Today, Palm Sunday begins the Holy Week. Holy week is overwhelming with liturgy and symbols to lead us ever deeper into the mystery of our faith.

So, the Church invites us this week to participate actively in the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, the celebration of the Passion of the Lord on Good Friday and the Holy Saturday Vigil Mass. You are also invited to take part in the Divine Mercy novena starting on Good Friday.

In the first reading Isaiah describes a servant who receives a kind of treatment that is more insult than injury. He has been spat upon and mistreated; his bones are not broken, his blood has not been shed, but he has been shamed, treated in a way intended to disgrace him in the eyes of the people.

This is where his faith in God overrides his self-preservation and any tendency to cling to ordinary conceptions of dignity.

The point is the servant believes in God more than in his tormenters' power. So no matter what happens he continues to say, "**The Lord God is my help, therefore I am not disgraced.**"

In today's psalm we see the psalmist, in all his suffering, turning to God. None of this is enough to prove to him that God does not exist nor even that God refuses to hear his prayer. Deeper than all the suffering he feels, deeper than his pain and loneliness, the psalmist believes in God's love. Therefore, he can pray, "**You O Lord be not far from me; O my help, hasten to aid me.**"

He even looks toward the day he will again be in a position to proclaim God's faithful love to his brethren.

Jesus' passion is a long series of painful events. In the Gospel we read of betrayal of Jesus by Judas, his agony in the garden; his arrest and

imprisonment, his betrayal by Peter, the flight of all but one of his apostles; his trial, the mocking and scourging; his rejection by the people followed by his condemnation to death; his carrying of the cross—his own death instrument, and finally, his execution and death.

Jesus' passion was painful but it ended not in death but in life. Because Jesus endured to the end he was transformed into glory in the resurrection.

The first reading, the psalm and the gospel reading teach us that nothing, no loneliness or rejection, no humiliation, no pain not even death, is more powerful, more valuable or more vital than the love of God.

As we celebrate the paschal mystery of the Lord; the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ this week let us keep in mind that our human existence has been shared by Jesus Christ. He knows how we feel the burden of each day, the weight of solitude or misunderstanding, the heaviness of daily disappointments and shattered hopes. But he is telling us that God is with us every day, close beside us to encourage and help us on the way.

So as Christians must trust completely in the love of God when caught up in painful and difficult situations.