

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD,  
MARCH 28, 2021

## **WHAT GOD DID FOR US: WHAT CAN WE DO FOR HIM?**

"Christ our Lord, though innocent, suffered willingly for sinners and accepted unjust condemnation to save the guilty" (Preface of the Passion of the Lord).

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord gives an overview of what our Shepherd did to shield and save us from being swallowed up by waves of eternal death. Many prophecies of old spoke of the LORD'S redemptive work in terms of restoration, the bringing back from exile. "Thus says the Lord GOD: I will take the children of Israel from among the nations to which they have come and gather them from all sides to bring them back to their land" (Ezekiel 37:21). Exile symbolizes separation from God. Gathering back removes alienation and unites God's people once again to their source and life. The prophet Jeremiah vividly describes what comes with this saving work of God, "I will make with them a covenant of peace; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them, and I will multiply them, and put my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling shall be with them; I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Ezekiel 37:26-27). This Son of God brought this about at the cost of a great price. The Passion narrative is the account of this great price God paid to redeem man.

At the threshold of the Lord's crucifixion, Caiphas, the high priest that year in 33 A.D, made this prophecy about the cost of redemption, "You know nothing, nor do you consider that it is

better for you that one man should die instead of the people, so that the whole nation may not perish" (John 11:50). John's gospel insightfully indicated that, "He did not say this on his own, but since he was high priest for that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not only for the nation, but also to gather into one the dispersed children of God. So, from that day on they planned to kill him" (John 11:51-53). When the hour of redemption came, Christ Jesus willingly surrendered himself as an innocent victim for our redemption. Today's Second reading puts it poignantly, "Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, 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 (Philippians 2:6-8).

In the course of the coming days leading up to Easter, we shall see a gradual disclosure of all the wonders the Lord did to save us from eternal exile and damnation.

Dear brothers and sisters ! As we participate in today's liturgy, what is the Lord saying to us? The thought that comes to my heart is the word of the Psalm, "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us up alive, when their anger was kindled against us; then the flood would have swept us away, the torrent would have gone over us; then over us would have gone the raging waters. Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us as prey to their teeth! We have escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we have escaped! Our help

is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth (Psalm 124:2-8).

Being the beneficiaries of such an immense gift from the Lord, what shall you give him in return? Do not surrender to the yoke of slavery. In the present time, we must be awake to the fact that we are in a culture war for the soul of our nation. Core family and Biblical values are constantly under attack. Our children and grandchildren are being exposed to an avalanche of secular ideologies that deny decency, respect and life. Shall we fold our hands and watch the erosion of all the truth, moral norms, natural laws and values we hold dear? Bringing this home, for those of us who have grandchildren, how many of them are growing up unbaptized and being taught that one can be a man today and tomorrow a woman or that two women can get married, or two men marry or that abortion is a your civil right?

Are these the reasons why Christ died on the cross for us? What can we do? We can take our cue from those who followed Jesus into Jerusalem on the day of his triumphant entry. They spread their clothes and leafy branches crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is to come! Hosanna in the highest!" They acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah. They were not afraid of the ruling authority that made a decision to kill anyone who acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah. In the midst of all the confusions of our time, can you stand up for what you believe, can you stand up for what is true, right, honorable and just? Can you stand up for the One who died on the cross for you?

