

Palm Sunday – Cycle C

March 28, 2010

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Good Morning. I always like to reflect on what we think about as we are listening to the Passion whether it is today, of course the longest Sunday Mass we have in the whole year or whether it is Good Friday when we reflect on the Gospel, the Passion of Christ or Good Friday, what is it that we think about? I had heard a great saying - grief is the cost we pay for love. Grief is the cost we pay for love or for loving and the deeper the grief the deeper the love. So when we are listening to the Passion of Christ, when we are listening to what He did is it something that causes you and me grief because you and I have deep love for the Lord? Or is it something that causes us boredom or irritation because it is very long? Or why isn't Father like other priests where he lets people sit during this time? Why does he make us stand for the Passion? I was talking to someone from Iowa last night and he said, "You don't make your people stand through all of it, do you?" I go, "Of course." "All of our people say it is too long. All of our priest say, "Sit down." I said, "That's what makes people wimps. I can't do that." We have got to do some suffering for Christ and if our suffering is, "Oh I have got to stand for the Passion!" Oh come on! Come on. That is the stupidest thing people get crazy over. But it has to be something where it really enters into us.

As I was saying last night and most of you people have been with me for over 10 years and you should know this more than anything else, if when you walked in and I handed you a piece of paper and I said okay, before the homily started, okay I want you to list the things you are most grateful for. Would it be even on the top ten for most of you. Hopefully it would be number one for all of you. But would it even reach the top ten before this homily. And you would say the number one thing I am grateful for is Christ gave His life for me. That is it. That is why you and I will live forever because someone else died for us. Someone else gave His life for us. This is the number one thing that ever happened to you or for me. Nothing else is important. Nothing else except for that one thing. If that would not have happened none of us would live forever. That is the point. It is the most important thing that ever happened for you. What has to happen is that has to really enter in. I have to know that more than intellectual knowledge. I have to have that as an experiential part of my life. If anyone was to ever ask me, BAM! what is the greatest thing that ever happened to you, you say Christ died for me. It's just natural. It is part of who we are. As Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ so the life I live now is no longer my own." That becomes so true in our own lives – that we no longer live. So when we listen to the Passion, it enters into us and I am thinking, wow! This is someone who loved me so much He went through all this suffering for me. What has to get inside of our hearts is here in one of the prayers today, the blessing says, "Christ was obedient unto death. May we follow His example."

What happens today is we listen to this Gospel and we listen to the Second Reading and I would encourage you a great thing to take us and begin us through this Holiest of weeks, I call it Hell week myself. I say it is Hell Week and they always say, "Oh Father isn't that being disrespectful?" "On, no, no, no." It was Hell Week for Christ, let me give you a hint, terrible, terrible week for Christ. Very busy week for priests. What will help you get through this week if you really want to meditate is to spend time with the Second Reading today and to spend time with it all of this week, Philippians, chapter 2. Spend time with the whole chapter. It begins with God, "Jesus though He was in the form of God, did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather He emptied Himself and took the form of a slave." Isn't that amazing.

Every time you come and look at the crucifix that here is God who emptied Himself and became a slave. So what does that mean for you and me? That we need to empty ourselves and become slaves of God the way He became a slave. He became a slave so much that He allowed His creatures the ones He created to torture Him and to kill Him and then He asked God, the Father for forgiveness for them. Talk about an emptying out. And so as it continues it says, "that He humbled Himself obediently accepting death, death on the cross." Those are the two things we have got to really be focused on this week and every day of our lives. We have got to humble ourselves. To humble ourselves means that we realize that I cannot take my next breath without God. That I can't do nothing without God. That God is God and I am His creature. I am totally dependent on Him for all things. To humble ourselves, humility is truth. There is a lot of great false humility in the Church now. False humility is the people who say I am not worthy. It is this very false thing. They are worthy. They just want you and me to build them up and say, "Oh no but you are. You are." No. Humility is truth. It is the truth about yourself. It is the truth about others. It is the truth about God. Humility means from the earth. It is the earthiness. I use to love my grandmother and I still do now that she is in heaven. I was telling the priest when I was down in Arlington, Virginia I was telling them the stories of my grandmother. And I have told you some other those stories and some of the things she would say, very embarrassing things. Once when I was with Bishop Timlin the one that gave me the Order of Acolyte before I was ordained, he is still alive and a very, very proper Bishop, good Bishop, he use to wear the white gloves, very proper. There is my little grandmother she was about in her late seventies at that time, early eighties, and she is coming and I am standing next to him getting my picture taken. My grandmother comes over from the side and I am thinking, oh don't talk to the Bishop. Oh, don't talk to the Bishop. And my grandma comes over and you know where I get my mouth, it is from my mother if you met her last night, and my grandmother. So my grandmother went up to the Bishop and says, "Can I ask you a question?" And I am thinking say no Bishop, say no Bishop. But the Bishop said, "Why certainly." And my grandmother looked at the Bishop and said, "How did a hunk like you ever get to be Bishop?" If only that was the end of the story. But the Bishop responded to her, "Holiness." And my grandmother responded to him, "Bull.." and it ends with a "t". She swore to the Bishop. Now do you understand me more? As I was sitting there and I was telling this these priests from the Diocese of Arlington, one of the priests was laughing. He says, "You come from a very earthy family." I go, "Very true. And I am a very earthy priest." Earthy means from the earth. There is no pretense. This is who we are and from there we can learn humility if we don't let our ego get to big. If we realize I am just who I am and God is everything and I am nothing. I am from the earth. Dirt. That is about what it is. So when we come before God with that humility of knowing who we are, no pretenses, this is me and You are God. Now we can go to the next part.

After we humble ourselves as Jesus did, He became of the earth with us. Then He became obedient to death. That must be with our own selves. We need to become obedient unto death. And death not the time we all die. We have to prepare for that final death by daily deaths to our own will, to our daily deaths. It is a death when you and I say no to what we want and yes to what God wants. That is a death. Jesus did that. He only did what pleased the Father. What a glorious thing. If that could be what we do, if someone could say that about us, the only thing we do is please the Father, the only thing I want to please the Father. And Jesus did everything to please the Father and to obey Him in all things. What He did He did for our salvation but also for our example. That we too would make sure that we are obedient. Now get this – when Jesus died it didn't end on the cross, did it? We don't spend this whole week just on the suffering of Christ. We get through the suffering to rejoice in the resurrection. But the way that happens is through that death. We must go through the death. There is no way out of it. But boy can we experience life. So we don't focus on the death, we focus on the life that God is going to give us. So when Jesus did this, "accepting death, even death, death on the cross because of this," it

says, "because of this God highly exalted Him and bestowed upon Him the name above every other name, so that at Jesus' name every knee must bend. And every tongue proclaim to the glory of God the Father that Jesus Christ is Lord." Lord means He is in charge. I am His slave. I do everything to please my Lord. Whatever He tells me that's what I do.

So I become a man or a woman of obedience. I don't do Christianity my way. Oh Jesus I like what you say over here but I don't like what you say over here. I like when You do this. I will follow You, love one another but I don't like when You said I can't have sex before marriage. Or I can't get drunk on purpose. Or I can't miss Mass on Sunday. I don't like that, so Jesus come and fit into my life and be what I want You to be and save me. No, no, no. Jesus is either Lord, or He is nothing. And if He is Lord that means He is in charge of every part of our lives.

So today, as we enter into the Holiest of weeks Jesus Christ humbled Himself and became obedient. If we are truly going to be His followers we need to humble ourselves, know who we are, and become obedient in all things. Got it? Get it? Going to live it? You better. May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.