

HOMILY

Let His Blood Be On Us

Father Larry Richards

Moderator, Bread of Life Community

Homily for Passion/Palm Sunday Cycle A

Isaiah 50:4-7 Philippians 2:6-11 Luke 22:14-23:56

Today we find ourselves propelled into Holy Week. We are propelled into the mystery of what it is all about - the fickleness of people, but also the mystery of praising and suffering intermingled. What were you thinking about during the Gospel? Sometimes when we come together for one of these special days we think, "Oh, I forgot, this is the long Mass of the year!" The longest Mass of the year next to the Easter Vigil is Palm Sunday. Some of you will say, "Oops...what a day to come to Bread of Life. Their Masses are already long, and now it's going to be longer!" You sit there and think, "gosh, my knees are getting tired from standing." Or, "Ok - is this over yet?" What were you thinking about during the Gospel? Were you thinking, "Jesus Christ did this for me?" Was it personal for you? It is a personal thing. He died for me. For ME!

The line that hits me in the Scriptures is from Matthew 27:25. "The whole people said in reply, "Let His Blood be on us and on our children." Of course, that was prophecy. That's us! So, the blood of Jesus Christ spilled at Calvary is poured over us this day. Thus, there is a triumph there. Sometimes we think we have to endure Lent to get to Easter. Lent in itself is a triumph. It isn't that Christ had to get through Calvary to get to the Resurrection. Calvary becomes a sign of triumph. It's the mystery of total self surrender rising up victorious. There is victory in giving it all away. That's why Good Friday is called Good. It's the awesome totalness of self sacrifice. There is victory in that! We don't just prepare for Easter by going through Lent. We learn that there is victory in suffering and denying ourselves. Victory! And the victory comes from the blood of Jesus outpoured on us.

Sometimes some of the theologians (even some of the good ones) say that the Church is getting away from the theology of Atonement. When you have a Theology of Atonement, that means that Jesus Christ HAD to die on the cross. He had to fulfill the justice of the Father. They say that when you make God out to be like that, then you make God out to be an ogre. I completely disagree! That is not the theology of the Catholic Church. That IS the theology of some modern theologians. We don't want to deal with atonement. Jesus Christ spilled His Blood for the forgiveness of our sins! It's very clear, is it not? Don't we say it every day at Mass? "This is My Blood. The Blood of the new and everlasting covenant, to be shed for you and for all, for the forgiveness of their sins." It's so necessary that the Blood of Jesus be spilled!

A couple of years ago at St. Luke's I was sitting during Good Friday services since I was a concelebrant. One of the priests who is no longer there got up and told the whole congregation, "It was not the Father's will that Jesus die on the Cross." I almost got up and killed him right there in the sanctuary! "It's not the Father's will that Jesus die on the Cross!!!" What's that? Of course it was the Father's will that Jesus die on the Cross. When Jesus was struggling and suffering at Calvary, he said what? "Your Will be done." And when He said, "Your Will be done," He went to the Cross. There is no way around the atonement. It can't be done. God is a God of Justice. If God says, "If you do this you will die," guess what? If you do it, you will die. He is not a liar. God doesn't set up rules and then say, "That's ok, I didn't mean it." As I like to say, He didn't give us the Ten Suggestions, He gave us the Ten Commandments. That's it. They are commandments. "Do this and you'll live, don't do this and you'll die." That's a God of Justice.

What you have to understand is that this God of Justice is also a God of Mercy. Right? What does He do? He fulfills His own justice. Do you understand that? God became us, and paid His own penalty. That is the beauty of Good Friday, of Holy Week. God demands justice from us because He is a just God. But, He knows that we can't do it, so He becomes us in Christ and He dies. He fulfills His own justice. I don't see that as an "ogre God," I see that as a loving God - as a God who will not betray His own justice, but fulfills it Himself in mercy. The only way that we participate in that is by entering into intimacy with the Blood. You and I need to enter into intimacy with the Blood of Jesus Christ - to really beg the Blood of Jesus Christ to be poured over you and me, to be immersed in the Blood, to be washed in the Blood, to be cleansed in the Blood, to be so intimate with the Blood of Jesus Christ. "Let His Blood be on us and on our children!" WE must cry out. Yes, we were in the crowd. Yes, we everyday cry

out, "Crucify Him. Crucify Him." Every day we sin, we do the same thing. Every time we sin, we cry out, "Crucify Him!" And, every time we come to Him for forgiveness we say, "Jesus, let your Blood be upon me." To enter into that... The way we do that is to be crucified with Him.

You know I love to preach on Galatians 2:19-20. I won't say it again, because I'm sure you are tired of listening to it. The reality is, when I have been crucified with Christ, then He starts living in me. The only way to experience the life of Christ is by dying with Him. We need to go through it. The only way to triumph is for you to die. The only way to become intimate with the Blood of Jesus is by being crucified. That's how you enter into it. You allow yourself to be crucified with Him.

Phillips, Craig and Dean are three pastors and they put this verse into a song, "I Have Been Crucified With Christ." One of the lines says, "Even tho I had to die, I've never been so much alive." That's where it happens. The victory in each of our lives is when we enter into the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Look at the second reading today, Philippians Chapter 2. This is another verse you should have memorized by now, because I think that out of fifty-two weeks of the year, I deal with it forty times!. "Though He was in the form of God, He did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather, He emptied Himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men. He was known to be of human estate. It was thus that He humbled Himself even more, by accepting death, death on a cross." In the next line it says, because of THIS, because of THIS, because He accepted death on the cross, because of THIS, "the Father highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name above every other name, so that at Jesus' name every knee must bend, and proclaim to the glory of God the Father, Jesus Christ is Lord!" It was because of this though, that you and I cannot pass over that. If you and I are going to enter into the redeeming power of Christ, it's going to be because of this also - that we did not deem equality with the human race something to be grasped at; rather, we emptied ourselves and became servants, accepting even death, death on the Cross with Jesus Christ. Because of this, our Father will exalt us. **THERE IS NO OTHER WAY.** Are you willing this day to be crucified with Christ, to get intimate with His Blood? To get intimate with His Blood is when your blood is spilled with His Blood and they mingle. This is the only way to be intimate with the Blood of the Lamb. Are you willing to be intimate with the Blood of the Lamb? Are you willing to enter into this week, the holiest week of the year, by allowing yourself to be crucified with Christ? May each of you know his love today and forever. Amen.

