

HOMILY – PALM SUNDAY 2018

The long reading of the Passion (including the Gospel preceding the entrance procession) in today's liturgy provides us with an introduction to the scandalous events of Holy Week. These events range from the people's adulation of Jesus as Messiah to their demands that he suffer a humiliating and shameful death at the hands of the Romans. Palm Sunday and Holy Week remind us of the bewildering contradictions in how the people treated Jesus.

At first the people treated him as a king. There was tremendous joy and excitement among them when he entered Jerusalem. They welcomed him as a Messiah.

Less than one week later, however, a rowdy mob insisted that Jesus be crucified. Their attitude toward him has changed a whole new direction. We might ask: Why?

In a few moments I will invite you to spend a few minutes in reflective silence and contemplate on this question of "why?"

As you do, maybe you can ask why are we humans so fickle? In contrast to us, God is loyal, steadfast and completely dependable. God is self-giving, loving, compassionate and ever forgiving. Why does so much of humanity seem to reject Jesus' teaching? Why do nations wage war, devalue human life by crimes of violence, human trafficking, abortion, intolerance and unjust systems that keep people in dire poverty and hopelessness? Why can't the world see that the commandment to love one another is the only solution that can heal these wounds of society? Why do so many endure the weight of carrying the cross and so few reach out to help lessen the burden?

As you spend this time in reflection consider another question: where are you in the Gospel today? Are you shouting: Hosanna to the Messiah" or are you with those who are shouting "Crucify him"? And then ask yourself: WHY?