

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord
The Commemoration of the Lord's Entrance into Jerusalem (B)
(Mark 11:1-10)
29.03.2015

Hosanna!

This word sets the tone for the Great Week upon which we embark.

The Aramaic word *hosanna* might be best rendered: *save, we pray!*

This is the cry of our hearts as we begin our Holy Week celebrations.

Hosanna! Save us, we pray! Set your people free!

The Longing for freedom is one of the deepest yearnings of the human heart.

Christ comes to meet us in our desire to know His salvation.

He offers us His saving grace as a gift to be received.

We must remember that the Lord will never impose anything upon us. Because He loves us, He respects our liberty.

He needs to hear us express our longing to be released. He needs us to formulate our request for freedom if He is to answer our prayer and fulfil the desire of our hearts.

As we enter into this Holy Week, as we journey with Jesus celebrating His great saving acts, let us make our own the prayer of the Hebrew children. Let us have frequent recourse to it, using it as a kind of mantra: *Hosanna! Save us, we pray! Lord, set your people free!*

Let us pray: *Accord me the grace of that freedom of heart which You long to see me enjoy, living in Your love.*

Amen!



Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord
Eucharist (B)
(Isaiah 50:4-7 / Mark 14:1-15:47)
29.03.2015

They had Jesus bound and took Him away and handed Him over to Pilate.

The gospel goes on to speak of Pilate's bid to set Jesus free.

Pilate asked the crowd: Do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews?

Reading this section of the Passion narrative, a few paragraphs from Victor Frankl's book *Man in Search of Meaning* came to mind.

I thought of what Frankl recounts about his meeting with a young woman as she lay on her death bed, a stark wooden bunk, in a Second World War Concentration Camp.

This young woman knew that she would be dead within the next few days. Frankl remarks that as he talked with her she was cheerful in spite of this knowledge. He recounts how

pointing to the window of the hut where she lay, the young woman said to him: 'This tree here is the only friend I have in my loneliness'. Through that window she could see just one branch of a chestnut tree, and on the branch were two blossoms. 'I often talk to this tree', she said.

Frankl was startled and didn't quite know how to take her words. He asked himself: Was she delirious? Did she have occasional hallucinations?

Anxiously, he asked her if the tree replied.

'Yes', she responded.

He went on. 'What did it say to her?'

She answered, 'It says to me I am here – I am here – I am life, eternal life.'

Frankl remarks: *That tree and the message it spoke to this young woman did something extraordinary. It kept her from giving in to the camp's degenerating influences.*

It gave her an 'inner hold'. That 'inner hold' was an interior freedom.

Lying there, a prisoner awaiting certain death, this young woman was free inside, just as Jesus was in His passion, even though He was held bound in captors' chains.

Pilate meant well when he asked if the crowd wanted Jesus released, he wanted to free Jesus, but the reality is that, even if he had managed to have Jesus unbound from the physical chains holding Him captive, it wasn't within Pilate's power to give Jesus, or any other person, freedom of mind and heart.

Even though Jesus stood there fastened tight by the bonds in which they had enchained Him, He enjoyed interior freedom.

Pilate did not need to release Jesus for Jesus to experience Himself as a free man.

We are shown in other gospel accounts, in those episodes which recount for us the plotting against Jesus, and again in today's Passion narrative, that it was those who rejoiced to see Him led away bound, and who insisted upon His on-going detention, who were really lacking in freedom. We are told that they (the religious authorities of the day) were *overcome by jealousy of Jesus*. Their envy held them prisoners.

When I thought of what the young woman said to Frankl about the tree speaking to her, I was led to think of a famous poem 'The Dream of the Rood' in which that tree speaks of being felled first and then later used as the cross on which Jesus was crucified.

I remember the morning a long time ago

That I was felled at the edge of the forest

And severed from my roots. Strong enemies seized me, bade me hold up their felons on high,

And made me a spectacle. Men shifted me

On their shoulders and set me on a hill.

Many enemies fastened me there.

I saw the Lord of humankind

Hasten with such courage to climb upon me.

I dared not bow or break there

Against the Lord's wish, when I saw the surface

Of the earth tremble.

I could have felled

All my foes, yet I stood firm.

Then the young warrior, God Almighty,

Stripped Himself, firm and unflinching.

He climbed upon the cross, brave before many, to redeem humankind.

Christ died on the cross to redeem humankind. Jesus died on the cross to set us and all people free.

The wood of the cross speaks to us of salvation, freedom.

We all need to hear the promise, indeed the assurance, of redemption, bound as we are, by many captive forces: fears of all sorts, hurts, wounds of the past, addictions, compulsive behaviours, shame, low self-esteem, depression, worries, concerns, bitterness, un-forgiveness, the grip of sin upon our lives ...

However bound we are, in whatever way that this may be, the tree sets us free.

The challenge addressed to us today is to realise our redemption.

What Jesus won for us some two thousand years ago on Calvary, He offers to us as we gather here in His presence this morning.

Today Christ invites us to see ourselves to be *free men and free women under grace*.

From the cross Jesus says to us: *I am here – I am here. I am life, I am eternal life.*

Fear not! I live! Walk with me throughout these Holy Days in which I come to free you from all the captive forces that bind you.

Amen!