

**Homily – Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord
April 9, 2017**

**Matthew 21:1-11
Isaiah 50:4-7
Psalm 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24
Philippians 2:8-9
Matthew 26:14-27:66**

Today's gospel describes a time of intense darkness – like the chaos at the beginning before God said "Let there be light." There is confusion, polarization, disillusionment, fear, anxiety, denial, betrayal in the story of the Passion as well as an earthquake, the tearing of the Temple veil, the opening of tombs . . . Chaos!

As we listen to today's two gospels, where do we stand? With whom do we identify? With the enthusiastic crowds who welcome Jesus to Jerusalem – or the hostile crowds who shout for his death? With the apostles – asleep, fleeing, denying, betraying? With the Galilean women who watch the crucifixion from a distance? With Pilate washing his hands of responsibility – or his wife disturbed by dreams? With the leaders demanding Jesus' death – the crucified thieves reviling him – the passersby jeering at him – or the absent disciples? With Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple, coming forward only after Jesus' death? With Simon of Cyrene helping Jesus carry his cross? With the Roman torturers and executioners – or with the centurion and his men who proclaimed "This truly was the Son of God!"? Where are you and I in this narrative? Where do we stand?

However, besides the darkness there is a fundamental saving truth in today's readings: all that takes place is in accord with God's plans – "so that Scripture might be fulfilled." Everything ultimately is in God's hands. God is present – although at times we may call out with Jesus: "Why have you abandoned me?" Jesus prayed during his agony: "not my will, but as you will." He was "obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." How can the cross be God's will? During this Holy Week we will learn about God's great love for us!

My dear sisters and brothers, you and I live in a time of great confusion and spreading chaos. There is increasing darkness across the land. There is great fear and anxiety, especially among the poor, the vulnerable, the immigrant, the refugee. There are forces of evil at work among us, sowing chaos, causing divisions, ignoring severe inequalities, disrupting the justice and peace that God wills for his creation. As disciples of the Lord Jesus, where do we stand today in regard to the kingdom of God – a place of justice, peace, harmony, and unity? With whom do we identify in today's readings? We must make a choice **for** or **against** the kingdom of God! Let us be awake, courageous, and faithful to our call as missionary disciples. Let us stand at the very foot of the Cross!