

Homily – Palm Sunday

April 14, 2019

The four Gospels paint different theological portraits of Jesus. Each of them gives valuable insights for reflection.

In Luke's gospel Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem is not a festive parade with large numbers of noisy people – a fickle crowd who would later in the week scream for his crucifixion. Instead, Jesus is accompanied only by his disciples. They praise God for Jesus' marvelous works that they have witnessed. The self-righteous Pharisees see this as a scandal and object to the disciples' witness.

Throughout the story of Holy Week in Luke's Gospel Jesus remains gentle, forgiving, at peace with himself and his heavenly Father. An angel ministers to him during his prayer at Gethsemane. He heals the ear of one who has come to arrest him. He is the reason for reconciliation between Herod and Pilate. He promises Paradise to the repentant thief on the cross. Jesus forgives his executioners and peacefully commends his spirit to the Father as he dies.

The crowds are also different. Like the Daughters of Jerusalem, they accompany Jesus to his execution in sorrow and do not mock him. Afterward, they return to their homes, striking their

breasts and lamenting his death. Those who do mock him are the religious authorities, the soldiers, and one of the co-crucified wrongdoers. Nevertheless, the Roman centurion acknowledges Jesus' innocence after the Lord has died.

Pope Francis has pointed out that “the Lord did not save us by a triumphal entry into Jerusalem or by means of powerful miracles.” As St. Paul says the Son of God emptied himself and took upon the form of a humble servant, a slave even, who washed the feet of his disciples on the night before his passion and death. Jesus stands in solidarity with us sinners in all things, yet he was without sin. He shows us the Father's unconditional love for us by his humbly enduring the agony of the cross and shedding his blood for us.

Pope Francis says that “by humbling himself, Jesus invites us to walk on his path.” Let us walk with him in silence as we ponder the mystery of this holiest of weeks. Our Lady, the Sorrowful Mother, will walk with us and stand with us at the foot of the cross, a faithful disciple and loving mother always. As the Holy Father says, “Jesus died crying out his love for each of us: young and old, saints and sinners, the people of his times and of our own. We have been saved by the Cross, and no one can repress the joy of the gospel!”