



## Palm Sunday

### In Praise of Passion

**Sr. Rosemarie Greco, DW**

This day in 2019, is one of contrasts, contradictions, complicities, and courage.

The liturgy of the Palms, which precedes the Mass, is very brief in relation to the focus of this Sunday. Even though the common term for this day is “Palm Sunday,” it is really “Passion Sunday.” The scriptures draw our attention to the impending suffering, passion, and death of Jesus. In fact, in the scripture account from Luke’s gospel, there is no mention of palms. The cloaks of the people are strewn on the colt and on the ground for Jesus to ride into Jerusalem.



***Jesus of the People***

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The people were eager to reveal themselves, removing their protective covering, shouting Hosannas to welcome Jesus. The readings of this Sunday are a taste of very distasteful events to come.

This is a day of contrasts and contradictions. The cheering, admiring crowd that welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem became, in contrast, a few days later, a violent crowd yelling, “Crucify him.” The people changed with the political mood of the moment. Their fickleness contrasts with the steadfast love and forgiving heart of God in Jesus during this ordeal. Where do we find ourselves in these crowds? Hopefully, not taking the role that the congregation is frequently assigned in missalettes, shouting “crucify him.”

This is a day of complicities, being involved in impactful behaviors that affect justice. During the tense days of the passion, people are on edge, not knowing whom to trust or whom to speak. Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss; Peter denies knowing Jesus. They become complicit in the negative turn of events. On the positive side, Simon of Cyrene is “complicit” with caring behavior with his compassion in carrying the cross

with Jesus; the women who followed Jesus on the road also showed a “complicit caring” as also did Joseph of Arimathea in providing a respectful tomb to bury Jesus. Complicity has the power to be a force for good and justice if we direct it toward truth.

This is also a day and a week of courage. As I read the Passion narrative, I surprised myself at two characters I found courageous. The courage I see is the courage of speaking the truth even when large crowds, authority, and political pressure see events differently. The two are Pilate



and Herod. Both of them tell the maddening crowd that they “have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him....Release him.” They are definitely not appealing to their base. In response, the out-of-control crowd amplifies, “Crucify him.” Finally, the ultimate in courage is Christ Jesus. He does not cling to power or the earlier acclamations of the people. He empties himself of self, of ego; he humbles himself even to the point of death. He forgives, knowing that his persecutors do not know what they are doing.

St. Louis de Montfort says that the way of Wisdom, the way incarnated in Jesus, is the way of justice – the way of fairness and mutuality that treats all beings with respect. To be persecuted for this is to be praised. (*Love of Eternal Wisdom*, #139\*)

And so, that’s why Christians pray: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you; by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

*\*The Love of Eternal Wisdom: A Revisioning of St. Louis de Montfort’s Contemplation on Divine Wisdom*, Rabbi Rami Shapiro, © 2011, Wisdom House Publication, Litchfield, CT.



**Station III - Jesus Falls for the First Time**

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