

Homily. Palm/Passion Sunday. Year.A. 4/5 April 2020.

A short note. Jesus made many journeys in His short few years of ministry, but none were more dramatic than what was to be His final journey to Jerusalem. This weekend in our Churches we would have re-enacted this journey, and during Holy Week His walk to Gethsemane, to Calvary and then His placement in the tomb. Next Sunday, Easter Resurrection Day, we would have walked together with Jesus into New Life. Our unity in faith cannot be celebrated in such way this year. We can (and we must) celebrate these journeys in our homes and hearts.

The Holy Week Liturgies for Home are on our Parish website. Our main focus needs to be the ceremonies at our Archdiocesan Cathedral. On Holy Saturday evening (11/4) at 6.00pm I will be alone in St. Joseph's Church for 30 minutes in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. I'll do the same on Easter Sunday morning (12/4) at 9.00am at Christ the King Church. Please join me in your hearts and prayer at these times.

Below is my homily for Palm Sunday.

Quo Vadis is Latin meaning; Where, or which way are you going? The ancient story is that Peter was fleeing Rome in fear because he could foresee his coming arrest, trial and impending crucifixion under the Romans. As he was fleeing the City he met a stranger (who was Christ) walking the other way, back towards Rome. Peter asked him, "Where are you going?". The stranger/Lord said that he was going back to Rome to be crucified again. Having denied and abandoned Jesus once before (at His trial) Peter realised that he was about to repeat the same terrible

mistake. He turned around and with Christ went back to Rome where he was tried and martyred. The relics of St. Peter, crucified for his faith, now rest directly under the main altar of the Basilica.

About 1800 years before this Abram lived in a city near the Persian Gulf where the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers enter the sea. He was well on in life, thought to be far past the age of changing very much, when he encountered a strange, new and powerful God speaking to him. This God asked him to pack up whatever he could carry, and with only his family and a few friends, set out for a land that God would show to him. He was never told the final destination, only that he would have to walk each day with God by his side until God chose to lead him this new land and home. The promise was that if Abram did this then he would be the father and source of life for a family that would be everlasting and enjoy God's blessing, favour and salvation. With nothing clearer than this Abram listened, heeded and chose to set out on this great journey that had no clear end point, no absolute final destination. Abram decided to trust in God's word, so becoming Abraham, father to Isaac and all peoples of faith in the One Living God.

All of us, whether we know it or not, are embarking on a great journey right now, and the destination isn't any clearer to us than it was to Abraham. Like Peter, we have a meeting, an appointment with the Lord along the road who is asking us; Quo Vadis? Which way are you going? When these long and testing months of pandemic, physical separation and so many changes finally end the only clear thing is that nothing can ever go back to the way it was in February 2020. We must understand, even now if only dimly, that nothing can be the same if for no other

reason than that we won't be the same ourselves when pandemic phase comes to an end.

The final boarding calls for this journey, the journey of faith for our times, are being announced right now. We cannot afford to be deaf to this call nor choose to deliberately ignore it without the dire consequences of missing out altogether, being left forever behind; of going the wrong way into obscurity, instead of going with Christ back towards Rome and God's destiny for us.

The key right now is for you and me to hear and then truly listen in our hearts to God's call to join the journey for a destination known only unto the One who speaks to us in this time. So, I'll end my words to you here sharing with this simple and very clear instruction from St. Mother Theresa, canonised by Pope Francis on 4 September 2016. She said; God speaks to us in the silence of our hearts. Listening is the beginning of prayer.

Peace to you and yours. Fr. Mark Percival. PP.