

# *A Liminal Time*

Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday

*The Liturgy of the Palms*

Luke 19:29-40

*The Liturgy of the Word*

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 ✕ Psalm 22:1-11 ✕ Philippians 2:5-11 ✕ Luke 22:39-71; 23:1-56

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A member of the parish wrote me this week and told me how difficult it usually is for them to go to church on Palm Sunday. They said: Its' hard enough to handle the changes in emotion that occur in Holy Week—stretched out over an entire week – let alone one hour. They were exactly right. This annual liturgy is capable of dragging our emotions all the way from loud shouts of Hosanna at the gate of Jerusalem, to the utter silence of death. That's the reason I'm reflecting for a few moments now, rather than following the reading of the gospel. Beginning with the hymn that we are about to sing, the mood of the liturgy makes that extreme shift that my friend finds so unnerving. I'm speaking now, so that after the hymn and the dramatic presentation of the gospel narrative we can just sit together in silence for a moment.

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We are near the end of the long journey that we have taken with Jesus

during Lent.

At last with the psalmist 'our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem.' And things will never be the same for us again. Once inside, the hosannas fade away. We'll soon find ourselves shouting different words. When we began this journey with Jesus, we didn't think it would end this way.

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We've talked before about 'thin places.' Those places where the line that divides our world of the "here & now" from eternity becomes very thin. When we enter a spiritually thin place it can be quite dangerous. When we're in a thin place we are at our most vulnerable. But it is also in these thin places that we find ourselves most likely to encounter God. As we enter the Liturgy of the Sunday of the Passion we step across the threshold from Lent into Holy Week. Into a thin place. If we can allow ourselves the luxury –if we can dare to put

ourselves at risk – we can experience the liturgies of this entire week as a thin place.

The liturgies of Maundy Thursday are, for many, the most intimate and meaningful liturgies of the year. Sharing a meal with our sisters and brothers in the Guadalupe congregation is something we don't do often enough. To break bread with a family whose life circumstances are so incredibly different than most of ours is truly a gift. The liturgy of footwashing is a huge stumbling block for many. For some it's embarrassing. For others it's too vulnerable. Or too intimate. If you've never experienced this liturgy, for whatever reason, please find your way here on Thursday night.

The liturgy on Thursday evening will end with the stripping of the altar. As you listen to the words of one of the most melancholy and lonely of the psalms, the altar guild, acolytes and clergy will remove all of the beauty, all of the symbols from the church. The barrenness itself, will now be a symbol of the abandonment that we feel. Of the abandonment that Jesus must have felt, when all of his friends had fled away into the night, just as we leave into the dark on Thursday night.

Everything will be naked and bare as we begin to experience liminal time – time 'in-between' – time growing more and more thin. Our existence and our experience has to grow as thin as it possibly can.

Because we can't get to Easter without going through Good Friday. On that most strangely named of days we are invited into the valley of the shadow of death. If you allow yourself to dive into the deep pool of these experiences during Holy Week – it might seem to last forever. It might seem like Easter will never arrive.

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For now, we begin to watch and to pray. It is all that we can do. We are in a liminal state. A 'time in between'. We can never go back and be who we once were. We are not yet in the place where we can become something new. As the music now begins, I invite you, as you are able, to stand in join in singing hymn 458. At the conclusion of the hymn, I ask that you be seated and refer to the narrative gospel text that is provided as an insert to the bulletin. Following the presentation of the gospel we will have a moment of silence, followed by the prayers of the people.