

**Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion  
March 16,2008**

**Homily**

**The readings themselves are the real focus for today. Remember the things that struck you so you can reflect on them during this Holy Week. I will keep my homily brief.**

**We return to Matthew's gospel this morning, both for the Blessing of the Palms and for the Passion. Remember Matthew wanted to show how Jesus fulfilled everything written in the Old Testament. His triumphant entry into Jerusalem fulfills the prophecy about the Messiah coming in peace.**

**The first reading for the Mass is the third song of the suffering servant from Isaiah. This passage, written more than 500 years before the birth of Jesus, presents many aspects of suffering that Jesus endured during his passion and death.**

**Our second reading presents a hymn from the earliest days of the church which summarizes the entire mission of Jesus and illustrates that Jesus fully embodied in himself the journey of the epic hero. Yet with Jesus we are dealing with fact and history.**

**The tone of our celebration is reflected in the two great processions or parades we have heard in today's two gospels: the triumphal parade with palm branches in which Jesus was hailed as Son of David, the messiah; and the parade of the passion in which Jesus is led to his terrible death, mocked as King of the Jews.**

**These two events are historical; they happened—to the same person, in the same city, within a single week. How could such a change happen? Yet it did.**

**These two events remind us of the unique person that Jesus is: truly divine, the only son of God; and fully human. Only by realizing that Jesus is both God and human can we make any sense out of the events we remember today—the events that are the climax of salvation history, of God’s plan to save humanity, to raise us from our lowest instincts (so many of which we see displayed in these readings) to the realm God always intended for us—of being children of God.**

**In our first reading on the first Sunday of Lent, we saw Adam and Eve freely choose to believe the serpent that God did not really love them or want what was best for them; that they needed to disobey God and take their lives and their futures into their own hands.**

**This was the pattern that all people have tended to follow. But God was determined to prove to us that he truly did love and care for us. And so he sent his only begotten Son to us to reveal God’s love in ways that could not be denied. The way he did that is fully revealed to us in the gospels, especially in the passion stories.**

**Jesus would reveal God’s love by putting aside his divinity and by identifying with us, especially in our poverty, vulnerability, and suffering. Unlike Adam and Eve, he would show us by his life that it was by trusting in God’s love and depending on God in our need, that we would find happiness and peace. He reversed the choice of Adam and Eve.**

**Matthew quotes *the* most powerful words of Jesus from the cross: My God, my God, why have you abandoned me. First,**

**we must remember that these are the words of a prayer, of Psalm 22. But they are a prayer that comes from the heart of a sinner who realizes the most powerful consequence of sin is the feeling of being separated from God. Jesus, though totally sinless, as one who always sought God's will and doing everything in God's way, identified with us sinners to show how much he loved and cared for us. He accepted the communal guilt of our humanity. And he remained faithful to his heavenly Father.**

**Jesus showed his love for us by becoming one of us. And by his words, his life, suffering and death, he showed us that we can trust God's love, that no matter what the consequences of our sins, or the sins of those around us—God will forgive us; God will save us; God will empower us to live as his children. And we will share in the risen glory of his Son, our Lord and brother.**

**It is precisely in identifying with us in our humanity so completely that Jesus most clearly reveals his divinity; reveals God's incredible love for us and all humankind.**