



Servants of Christ
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Our Mission: To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Our Vision: As Servants of Christ, we envision a transformed community, growing in Jesus, in the grace of God.

A Different Party

Isaiah 53: 4-5b

“In fact, it was our diseases he bore,
our pains from which he suffered;
yet we regarded him as punished,
stricken and afflicted by God...
...and by his bruises we are healed.”

This Sunday will be Palm Sunday, a time usually filled with processions, celebrations, and shouts of “Hosanna in the highest!” It was a party 2,000 years ago. It was a party a year ago. Not so much now. However, the truth is that it was a party for those in the crowd 2,000, but Jesus knew better. Last year it was a party because maybe we didn’t realize how bad things could get, but Jesus knew better. This year, it doesn’t feel like a party for those of us in the crowd, but Jesus knows better.

This Palm Sunday I want to pray for you and your family. We do not comprehend what our neighbors are going through.



I want to pray for the families that are missing being at work and those who are missing paychecks.

I want to pray for those Moms who say, "I have learned I am NOT a stay-at-home Mom."

I want to pray for family members who never got to say Goodbye because they couldn't visit the hospital or nursing home.

Thankfully, Palm Sunday is also Passion Sunday, and we need both because life is both a party and a passion of difficulty.

One of my favorite classes in seminary was about how Christian art through the ages always reflected the present circumstances of the people. We can see how theology grew in the first 4 centuries by looking at art on caskets. But the most telling thing that stuck with me was how the art surrounding a crucifix or an altar reflected the heart of the artist for his/her intended audience. In good times the art was more colorful and bright. But during the Plague and other times of catastrophic illness, Jesus' body was portrayed as bearing the diseases that the people were enduring. Some of the artwork is difficult to look at. But the people praying needed to know their God was with them, understood their pain, grief, loss, that God the Father needed to pull down the shade as his Son bore the destruction of the world on the cross.

The cross pictured above is the one Popes now carry. When it was first created, it was not received well by many religious leaders, but now it is embraced. By the way, it was created in 1919, the year after the Spanish Flu pandemic.

What might the disciples have to say to us who are in the virtual crowd this Palm Sunday? They expected Jesus to be their physical king to save them from the horrible conditions under the Roman Empire. Instead, Jesus said, "Take, eat. This is my body... Take, drink. This is my blood." After Jesus' arrest, the disciples gave up and fled (in Mark's version). Afterwards, they wished they could go back in time and remain with their friend.

Maybe the disciples would say, 'Don't give up like we did. The kingdom was there and we just didn't know it at the time.'

Maybe the disciples would say, 'Faith doesn't have to be like a roller coaster whose ups and downs depend on our present circumstances.'

This year will be a different party. But it was in 1918. It was in the plague of the Middle Ages. And it was during the first Palm Sunday. But the One who gives us himself and bears our diseases remains the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Prayer:

So we pray:

1. For the sick and infected: God, heal and help. Sustain bodies and spirits. Contain the spread of infection.

2. For our vulnerable populations: God, protect our elderly and those suffering from chronic disease. Provide for the poor, especially the uninsured.

3. For the young and the strong: God, give them the necessary caution to keep them from unwittingly spreading this disease. Inspire them to help.

4. For our local, state, and federal governments: God, help our elected officials as they allocate the necessary resources for combatting this pandemic. Help them to provide more tests.

5. For our scientific community, leading the charge to understand the disease and communicate its gravity: God, give them knowledge, wisdom, and a persuasive voice.

6. For the media, committed to providing up-to-date information: God, help them to communicate with appropriate seriousness without causing panic.

7. For consumers of media, looking to be well-informed: God, help us find the most helpful local information to equip us to be good neighbors. Keep us from anxiety and panic, and enable us to implement the recommended strategies, even at a cost to ourselves.

In Christ's Name. Amen.