**Palm Sunday – Cycle A**

April 12/13, 2014

Isaiah 50: 4-7; Phil 2: 6-11; Matthew 26: 14-27:66

I am always struck by the contrast on Palm Sunday, the contrast between the tone and tenor of the Gospel that is proclaimed before the procession with palms at the beginning of Mass and the mood of the reading of the Passion.

We first hear of Jesus riding on the back of a colt. He rides through the people of his time, trying to inch his way forward toward the gates of the city. It isn’t smooth going for him in many ways because there are so many people in front of him, behind him, to his right and to his left. There are so many men and women who lived in the countryside and on the roads because they didn’t have the money or the ability to live inside the city. They didn’t have the power, but they acclaimed Jesus as the Messiah. “Hosanna, Son of David!” they exclaimed. They hailed him and greeted him with joy.

Then, Jesus entered the city walls, the walls that kept the poor out and the powerful in. Everything changed at that moment. Now Jesus was in the presence of people who counted for something in the world; he was with the rich and influential. These people did not cheer or acclaim him; rather they complained about him. They accused him of blasphemy and sedition. The powerful saw him as a threat and they sought to kill him… and they did.

Even though the Scriptures were clear that the Messiah would come riding on a donkey, not a horse or some fancy chariot, many people inside those city walls didn’t understand. They wanted their Messiah to come with worldly power, not on the back of a lowly colt.

My friends, where do you look for him? Where do you find the Lord today? Look for him, if you will, in the lives of the mentally ill and the addicted. Look for him in the lives of the homeless. Look for him in the victims of injustice. Do you really want to see Jesus? Look for him, if you will, not in the halls of power, but in the backstreets and in the neighborhoods where the powerless live. Look for him, if you will, with the people who do not count for much, who are ignored and looked down upon, and when you find him, follow him.

Meditate on the cross and the crucifixion. Jesus on the cross is in the presence of criminals, foreigners, women and soldiers. The rich and the powerful have abandoned him and left him to die. Who received him? The cross received him. The repentant thief received him. The centurion received him. His mother Mary received him. God the Father received him.

Follow him to Golgotha. Follow him to the cross.

Walk with Jesus this Holy Week! Walk with him by sharing his Word with a hungry world, a world that yearns for him. We are not to keep his Word locked up inside the walls of our lives. We are, as Pope Francis tells us, to go out of these walls, this church building, out into the “peripheries” to those who cannot or do not enter these walls, and accept them and bring them in.

Let us walk with Jesus this Holy Week by attending all the Holy Week liturgies offered to you, walk with Jesus to the Cross and beyond, to the Resurrection.

Let us acclaim him our Messiah and King!