

Mar. 24-25, 2018

Thoughts from the pastor,

I pray that this will be a holy Holy Week for us all. It can start with prayers for the people in Texas where our palms come from. As some of you heard last weekend, the palm order has been in question. With all the storms in Texas the harvesting of palms has not been going well. So I wasn't sure if we would have palms for Palm Sunday. As I write this letter I am still not sure. We came up with ideas that could be alternatives. I am hoping that the weather will be nice so we won't need to do the other thing that the people did for Jesus, which was to throw their cloaks on the ground for Him and His donkey to walk on. The good news is that we don't have a donkey. They don't use restrooms if you understand my hint.

We have also thought in terms of doing the wave like at sports events. We could all show the palms of our hands and wave that way. We just couldn't burn those palms for Ash Wednesday next year. We also thought in terms of doing what some crowds do with some celebrities and use cellphone flashlights for the procession from the parish hall. Most of the kids I have talked to thought that would be a really great idea because Jesus is a celebrity.

The meaning behind Palm Sunday comes also from its other name, Passion Sunday. It is the first day of Holy Week and the first day we hear one of the accounts of the suffering and death of Jesus. Jesus had been thought of as a celebrity for a short time. On this Sunday we remember how the people of Israel welcomed Him into Jerusalem as a king. That glory only lasted a few days. Then they turned on Him and crucified Him. It only took a little urging from the High Priests for that change in attitude. I'm not sure priests have that influence anymore. Also it is easier to get people to change from good to bad, than from bad to good.

We can do the same kind of thing in our lives. We ask God to answer a particular prayer and are very excited when He answers it. When the next couple prayers go unanswered, we think He has abandoned us and so we abandon Him. There might even have been people in the crowd who had been healed by Jesus or had a relative or friend healed, who ended up yelling, "Crucify Him." Holy Week is a time to show that we are more steadfast in our faith than that.

As a priest I keep praying for the day when the Holy Thursday and Good Friday services are standing room only. For most people it is just a bonus vacation time. They come to the victory parade on Easter and feel like they have solidified their connection to Jesus so He will take them to heaven when they are done with all the time they want here on earth.

That is why one of the most amazing times for me is after the Holy Thursday Mass. The apostles were invited by Jesus to spend an hour with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane after the Last Supper. They fell asleep and were of little help to him in His request that they pray with Him. The Church has continued to invite people to an extra hour of prayer during that time from 8pm to midnight. The side chapel is our "Garden" on that night. The chapel is seldom full during those four hours. I'd like to see it overflow into the church and fill that. That would be better than palms, cloaks, or cellphone flashlights. Each of us has to decide how committed we are to Jesus. He died in order to conquer death and to show us how committed to us He is. What more do we expect from Him before we show that we want to live with Him?

So again, I pray that this will be a holy Holy Week for all of you. There will be a basket in the narthex for the Good Friday service for anyone who would like to help the Christians in the Holy Land. This is not a tradition that we have been good at doing at SEAS but it is something I want to help with.

God bless you,  
Fr. Frank