



April 17, 2011 Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

Once again Jesus cried out in a loud voice, and then gave up his spirit. Suddenly the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two top to bottom. The earth quaked, boulders split, tombs opened. –Matthew 27:50-52

Dear Friends:

The Temple in Jerusalem was constructed in a way to keep people separated through a series of courtyards, steps and gates. The outermost courtyard was for the Gentiles—those who were not Jewish. Farther in was the court of the women then the Court of the Israelites for the lay men.

Next there was the Court of the Priests (males), finally the Porch of the Temple where only priests chosen by lots could enter. Inside the temple a special room, the Holy of Holies, was separated by a huge curtain from an outer room. This sacred space was entered only once a year by the High Priest. Here was said to be the dwelling place of the Spirit of God.

The tearing in two of this curtain and the earthquakes and the opening of the tombs is Matthew's way of telling us that God has shattered the divisions that have arisen between peoples, the living and the dead, humanity and God.

The Spirit of God will no longer be confined but now dwells within all people—lay and clergy, men and women, Jew and Gentile. God will not be contained by our structures and hierarchies. And we learn to see God in everyone.

As we begin Holy Week and the Triduum (the three days of the Lord's Passover) we are reminded that we are a holy people because the Risen Lord dwells among us. We are also reminded that we are sinful and it was our wounded-ness and violence that killed Jesus.

It is especially important to remember that deep within each of us is that part which is capable of evil. Most often we can commit the vilest acts when we are certain that we are different from others, that we are better, that we are an exception, or our cause is righteous and true.

I am convinced that if Jesus was to come again and we had the opportunity we would crucify him again with the blessing of the Church. I say this because over history we have done just that persecuting Jesus in the prophets, the lives of the saints, the Jewish people, women, gay people, Muslims and anyone who is not an exception like us.

There is a prayer that was beautifully translated in the 1998 version of the Roman Missal that lamentably most will never hear. Fortunately, The International Committee for English in the Liturgy (ICEL) cleverly published it as an ecumenical resource in England:

O God of Eternal Glory
You anointed Jesus your servant
To bear our sins,
To encourage the weary
To raise up and restore the fallen.
Keep before our eyes
The splendour of the Paschal Mystery of Christ,
And by our sharing in the passion and resurrection
Seal our lives with the victorious sign
Of his Obedience and exaltation.
We ask this through Christ our liberator from sin,
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit
Holy and mighty God for ever and ever.

Please join us in the celebration of the Lord's Passover from death to new life by participating in our Triduum services.

Peace,

Fr Ron