

* The period from the Passion (Palm) Sunday and further through the days of the Holy Week completes the time of preparation for the paschal festival. As well as we entered into the days of preparation we've emerged in the central mystery of God's work of salvation through the Lord's death and resurrection. The time between Palm Sunday and Easter is the Holy Week when the disciples would rather mourn with tears than excite with joy.

* The Old Testament and the Gospel readings for today are different in a matter of the central idea. Usually OT reading says something definite that is found in the Gospel reading as well. But the reason why both not supportive readings come together is here. First, it is done in order to preserve the spirit of lamentation from intemperate joy while we are celebrating the triumph of the Palm Sunday. Second, to make Christians aware of the short memory that causes people to forget God's goodness and mighty deeds towards them.

* As usually the Palm Sunday associates with the joyful greeting of the King. Hearing this message our mind quickly creates the picture where it imagines the folk staying along both sides of the road, praising God, waving palm branches, and throwing their cloaks in front of the colt as it passed before them. "Long live the King" was the meaning behind their joyful shouts, because they knew that Jesus was intentionally fulfilling the prophecy in (Zec 9:9), "Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey..." To announce that he was indeed the Messiah, Jesus chose a time when all Israel including pilgrims would be gathered at Jerusalem. The people went wild. They were sure their liberation was at hand. Unmistakably the promised King went through the gate, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

* While Jews are saluting the Messiah with such a great enthusiasm let's overlap the four days ahead to see what is going in the city. Our Gospel reading for today says that early in the morning the Sanhedrin gathered again with singular purpose to find reasonable accusation against Jesus, -- "to put him to death," (Mar 14:55). In fact the charge of blasphemy would mean nothing to the Roman governor, so they accused Jesus of three other crimes. First, they said, he encouraged the people to not pay their taxes to Rome; second, claiming he was a king -- "the King of the Jews," and third, they said, he caused a chaos all over the countryside. Thereby these accusations would be cause for Pilate's concern.

* Now I tend to omit many peculiarities in connection with Jesus' trial at the praetorium because they are less important comparing with what happened on the cross. However the prelude of the cross actually begins in the palace hall where the Roman solders whipped Jesus. They used short handed whips with many leather lashes. On the ends of the lashes were tied

small bits of iron. Probably they tied Jesus to a low pillar so that his back was bent forward. It is enough to say that Roman soldiers caused him a lot of suffering. The (v 15) says briefly on this account, "and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified." The third hour was nine o'clock, the time when our Lord was crucified. The physical suffering in those additional hours on the cross was bad enough; besides, the Lord also endured continuous insult and mockery with common opinion that God deprived him of the power and abandoned him.

* Making research on account of Jesus' crucifixion I found the article about Mel Gibson's movie, "The Passion of the Christ." I think all of us have watched that movie. The article says that Gibson and his movie have been under ferocious attacks from media including liberal Catholic and Protestant theologians. Thus one of the pastors at the trendy Grace Cathedral, an Episcopal church in San Francisco said, "100 percent Hollywood trash," is how he described it. What was his advice to moviegoers? "I'd say don't bother. I think it's a big bore. I think a 5-year-old who has to get cancer surgery and radiation and chemotherapy suffers more than Jesus suffered; I think that a kid in the Gaza Strip who steps on a land mine and loses two limbs suffers more; I think a battered wife with no resources suffers more; I think people without medical care dying of AIDS in Africa suffer more than Jesus did that day. I mean, I don't want to take away from that, but this preoccupation with the intensity of the suffering, I think, it has no theological or spiritual value." What is your opinion? Ask yourselves.

* No doubt that pastor missed the point. Friends, as for me I am preoccupied with the opposite conviction. For instance, in the last sermon I introduced to you the absolutely different belief, I said, "The beloved Son suffered for the transgressions of many; (Isa 53:5). He took the sins of the world upon himself; the tremendous amount of sins caused Jesus to endure pain of the tremendous extent, not comparable with any other painful execution ever experienced by condemned to death." At the ninth hour our atonement was almost mastered; from the cross we hear the voice our Redeemer, " ... "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Immediately the twofold respond came from the Father. He took his Son out of the earth and He shook the earth, (Mat 27:50,51). Now the disciples continue to endure the suffering from ungodly. But in certain time God will deliver his people and in certain time God will shake unrepentant sinners.

* Hearing the voice of our Saviour during this Lent Season we came to the deeper understanding of God's dealing with suffering and our dealing with individual crosses. In Jesus Christ the Heavenly Father reveals very exceptional love by sending the beloved Son to save His own. The Son suffered a threefold pain: the physical pain that came from the wicked; the *emotional* pain because the *betrayal* of his disciples; and the spiritual pain as a result of being

“forsaken” by his Father. Amazingly, out of this threefold suffering God reveals his love to us. He punished beloved and absolutely innocent Son in our place. Christ voluntarily submitted himself to *the* sufferings for the benefit of sinful people. Instead of you, me and the billions, God judged his beloved Son.

* Now imagine again that Memorial Day, when surrounded by the disciples and friends, Jesus entered through the Beautiful gates in Jerusalem riding a donkey. Here we see joy and happiness among Jews. The Gospel from John narrates, that the reason why the crowd went to meet Jesus, was that they heard he had raised Lazarus from the dead, (Joh 12:18). But Jesus didn't share the people's enthusiasm and happiness, instead he wept, (Luk 19:41). Do you think Jesus wept because he foresaw his suffering on the cross or for another reason? The answer is in us, “Just on the verge of danger, not before, --God and the Saviour we adore; -- When danger is past, -- And all things are righted, -- God is forgotten, -- And the Saviour is slighted.” Today we learned the shortest historical memory phenomenon the world has ever known -- it took only 10 days in order people forgot by whom Lazarus was raised and by which authority was demonstrated the victory above devil and death. Can you imagine yourselves among the people with such a short memory? So, If you can, then tell them so that they give up their *excitement*. Tell them that Jesus suffered on the cross as a criminal for their transgressions. Tell them that he demonstrated willingness to forgive any penitent person who believes and is baptized, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. (Mar 16:16). Beloved, grace be with you. Amen. Stranger