

## Passion (Palm Sunday) 2020

### Homily

Last Sunday through the valley of dry bones and the raising of Lazarus we were reminded that the readings were all about overcoming death, and today we gather once more in an empty church in an endeavour to do just that; physically, to prevent the spread of the Corona virus and spiritually, to unite us to each other and to God. The virus, of course, will eventually disappear and many of us will emerge Lazarus like from our homes, but like Lazarus we cannot escape death, it will come in the fullness of time. Despite all our efforts, our fitness regimes, healthy eating and cosmetic surgery, death is our reality, and Lent is all about engaging with reality.

This is what Jesus' wilderness experience was all about, connecting with reality. He went out to isolate himself from the things which would keep him from reality, from God. Satan tried to lure him back but what was offered was a false it was a lie. Jesus endured the loneliness of the wilderness so that he might better know that he was not alone; he endured the wilderness to better understand God's presence. This is what Lent is all about, this is why we abstain from some luxuries and pleasures that we might better engage with reality and in doing so that we might ponder life and death, and God's presence in both. This Lent of 2020 has forced us into what is, for many, the loneliness of the wilderness. We might stay connected through Zoom, or email but this is virtual reality. It is my hope that our present situation, which seems almost surreal, gives us *more* opportunity to engage with reality not less.

In the seeming unreality of our current predicament we are forced to consider what indeed is real, and it is confronting. Some of us have inevitably pushed back we have seen crowds of youngsters gathered on

Bondi or St Kilda beach, thinking they are immune... 'this doesn't apply to us!' That same sentiment was on view today as crowds welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem, waving their branches, yelling Hosanna to the King! But it wasn't real, I wonder what they thought about Jesus' teaching and his warnings, perhaps they thought it didn't apply to them too!

Today of all days in the Christian calendar we are dealing with reality and unreality. Jesus' arrival into Jerusalem was very real, but in some sense it wasn't. Jesus was, in the words of Paul to his beloved Philippians, emptying himself. Yes, he was *the* king, he was *the* prophet, *the* priest...but he was going to die, he was going to die alone, this was his reality and in this he shares in our reality. By this sharing, Jesus also bears the burden of our unreality, the sin that distances us from God and each other, from what is real.

In the form of the cross Jesus bears our unreality. His death makes possible a communion that overwhelms the loneliness created by way we isolate ourselves from each other and from God; a communion that overwhelms sin. This is our work as we approach Holy Week in our isolation; it is a time we think again about what is indeed real. Our isolation at present time gives us the opportunity to dwell on how we distance ourselves and what we need to do when we finally gather once again. Because our communion is real and it is a communion with each other and with God that overcomes death.

In the Eucharist we believe that we celebrate a holy meal with all the saints who have gone before us. The devil would has us focussed on unreality which is isolation from God and each other, death. But in the sharing of this meal, even if we do so spiritually we understand our lives and deaths through the power of the resurrection, our isolation even now, is over; death has been undone. This is reality. Amen.