

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion – Year C
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Holy Family Catholic Church
Kirkland, Washington
14 April 2019

[Procession w/ Palms: Luke 19:28-40]
Isaiah 50:4-7
Psalm 22
Philippians 2:6-11
(Philippians 2:8-9) Luke 22:14-23:56

This Holy Week, Allow Jesus to Show You Who He Is

Sometimes, when we're struggling to discern God's will in a particular situation, or God's will for our life, in general, we might have the thought cross our mind, "God, please just tell me what you want me to do!" Have you ever had a thought like that?

We want to do good. We want to do the right thing. We want to make the best decision possible. But if it's not totally clear which is the best, or if we're afraid to make the wrong decision, then we might feel stuck or unsure how to act. We'd prefer a "shortcut", so to speak, to the good decision: "God, just tell me!"

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I felt that way a lot during several years of discerning the priesthood. I was in seminary, but the call of priesthood still wasn't totally clear. I spent a lot of time thinking about the pros and cons; looking at the different options for my life; going back and forth in my mind and in my heart. Yet, I still wasn't sure what God was calling me to; and I still wasn't sure what I wanted to do.

So, I left seminary. And came back. And left seminary again. And came back again. I felt stuck. And there were times when I would think, "Wouldn't it be easier, God, if you just told me whether I should be a priest or not?"

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I suppose, in some way, it *would* have been easier if God had just told me what to do. A "shortcut" to becoming a priest. But, looking back, I don't think being told what to do would've

been truly helpful for me. Having the experience of struggling to discern God's will was important. Yes, the struggles were difficult, but by engaging with God in those struggles, He was able to *show* me who He is and who He is calling me to be – rather than merely *tell* me.

Now, please don't misunderstand me: God *does* need to *tell* us things sometimes. The Ten Commandments, for example, give us clear boundaries between good and evil. We need that, especially because our consciences can become distorted by sin. But He loves us too much to leave our relationship as one of merely *telling* us what to do. Rather, He wants to be in a relationship of love with each of us. He wants to *show* us who He is and who He calls us to be, so that we can more and more freely believe; more and more freely choose the good He offers. It's only in freedom that we will truly believe and truly love Him.

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As Jesus entered into His Passion, the Sanhedrin were also looking for a “shortcut” to getting to know Jesus. Their purpose, however, wasn't about discerning the good; it was to trap Him.¹ They asked Him: “Tell us who you are.”² For three years, Jesus had been not only *telling* them with His preaching, but also *showing* them who He was with His signs, wonders, and relationships. “Day after day [He] was with [them] in the temple area.”³ In that time, they had resisted Jesus, questioned Jesus, challenged Jesus, conspired against Jesus. They had refused to engage Jesus in a relationship. And Jesus knew that simply telling them was not going to help them: “If I tell you, you will not believe.”⁴

The difference between those who opposed Jesus and those who came to believe is that the believers allowed Jesus the opportunity to not just *tell* them, but to *show* them who He was, through their experience of engaging Jesus in relationship. And they weren't so worried about getting it all right and being perfect in their discipleship. They allowed themselves to make

mistakes, so to speak. To let Jesus meet them where they were at in their life. To let Jesus' Mercy meet them in their humanity, their imperfections, and even their sins. To let Jesus transform their ordinary lives into extraordinary holiness.

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We see this throughout the Gospels in the example of the Apostles. Jesus met them in the ordinary places of their lives: in their fishing boats, at the custom post.⁵ They made the choice to follow Jesus.⁶ They had many stumbles along the way, but they kept at it, and allowed Jesus to *show* Himself to them, particularly by learning to accept His Mercy.

Peter was the prime example of that, and his imperfections were most clearly and memorably displayed in the Passion. He claimed loyalty, but showed himself to be weak and cowardly.⁷ He followed Jesus at a distance.⁸ He denied Jesus three times.⁹ But, at least he made an attempt to follow Jesus. And, most importantly, he let Jesus' Mercy help him get back up and start following Him again.

And we see that displayed in all those individuals who just happened to encounter Jesus on His way to Calvary. Ordinary folks in the midst of their ordinary lives. They had imperfect responses to their unexpected meetings with Jesus, but Jesus worked with their openness to the encounter, and transformed their ordinary lives into extraordinary holiness.

Simon of Cyrene didn't step forward to help Jesus – He was forced to help Him carry His Cross.¹⁰ Jesus, the Suffering Victim – He was the one who comforted the weeping women.¹¹ The Good Thief just happened to have his execution at the same time – it was his last chance for Mercy while still in this world and he took it.¹² The Centurion didn't stop the execution – but he did give a belated witness to the truth of who Jesus was.¹³ Joseph of Arimathea didn't speak up

loudly enough to stop the council from executing Jesus – but he did step up quietly to give Our Lord a proper burial.¹⁴

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As we enter this Holiest Week, give Jesus the chance to meet you in your ordinary life. Holy Week offers us beautiful opportunities for Jesus to meet us in what might otherwise be an ordinary week. To not only *tell* us who He is – to *show* us who He is.

Why not do something to help this week be *not* an ordinary week? Experience Jesus and His Mercy in Confession. Come to Mass throughout the week, or read the Daily Mass Gospel each day. Come experience the Sacred Triduum Liturgies on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Vigil. Pray the Stations of the Cross. There are many ways that you can make this ordinary week become one of extraordinary holiness.

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Whatever you're struggling with right now. Whatever fear you might have about doing God's will or making a mistake with a big decision. Please know that Jesus isn't expecting you to be perfect. Jesus doesn't want to simply *tell* you what to do or who He is. He's waiting for you to give Him a chance to *show* you what to do and who He is. To let Him meet you in your humanity, in your imperfections, in your sins. He's simply waiting for you to allow Him the opportunity to transform your life into one of extraordinary holiness.

¹ For example, see Luke 20:20: "They watched him closely and sent agents pretending to be righteous who were to trap him in speech, in order to hand him over to the authority and power of the governor."

² Luke 22:67: "They said, 'If you are the Messiah, tell us, '...'"

³ Luke 22:53

⁴ Luke 22:67

⁵ Luke 5:2, 27

⁶ Luke 5:11, 28

⁷ Luke 22:33

⁸ Luke 22:54

⁹ Luke 22:56-62; also: Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; John 18:15-18, 25-27

¹⁰ Luke 23:26; also: Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21

¹¹ Luke 23:27-28

¹² Luke 23:42

¹³ Luke 23:47 ; also: Matthew 27:54; Mark 15:39

¹⁴ Luke 23:50-53; also: Matthew 27:57-60; Mark 15:42-46; John 19:38-42