

Dance of Life

PALM SUNDAY – YEAR C

IS. 50:4-7; PS. 22; PHIL. 2:6-11; LK. 22:14–23:56

The name of the last Sunday of Lent, “Palm Sunday,” derives from the account of the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem (Lk. 19:28-40), which is read prior to the solemn procession that initiates today’s Eucharistic Celebration. The glorious entrance of Jesus into the Holy City in the midst of the rejoicing crowds serves as a counterpoint to the extensive Gospel of the Passion. Glory and death unite and mix in a festive dance of life. This is the story of Jesus. It is also our story.

This contrast emerges over and over again in Luke’s detailed account of the Passion of Jesus, who does not give in to despair during his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. Instead, he is comforted by an angel—a sign of God’s presence. At the terrible moment of his capture, he heals the ear of the servant who is arresting him and looks lovingly at the apostle who has betrayed him. From the cross, he forgives his crucifiers. The seed of our salvation is hidden within the agony and death of the Son of God.

This is also the experience of Second Isaiah, whom we already met in last Sunday’s Liturgy of the Word. Today’s First Reading—an excerpt from the anguish-filled Third Song of the Servant—is extraordinarily autobiographical: the prophet, who announces God’s imminent intervention to liberate Israel from the yoke of exile, is going through a very difficult personal situation. Arrested by the Babylonian police, who are enraged by his prophecies, which they see as threatening, he is then tortured and ordered to keep silent. The prophet, however, clearly feels that the Word of the Lord is prompting him to speak, so he stoically offers his back to the lash, withstanding the brutal scourging thanks to a fortitude not his own. He is a precursor of Jesus and of the many martyrs who experienced God precisely in situations of suffering and death. Among these we can recall here Fr. Andrew Santoro, whose tenth anniversary of martyrdom we celebrated on 5 February.

So let us contemplate the events of the Passion with a fresh gaze and renewed hope. Our own personal passions and sufferings also conceal seeds of salvation and hope. Deep down in our hearts, don’t we know this is true?

Stefano Stimamiglio, ssp



Prayer

Lord Jesus, I contemplate your Passion with grief and dismay. Is it possible that human beings can reach the point of killing Love?

Lord, you know that every person possesses the freedom and capacity to commit such an act.

My God, you are faithful through the ages. May I experience your presence when, like you, I become a victim of my brothers and sisters, Amen.