

Palm Sunday Homily, 2018 – Resurrection, Ansonia

+May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

“Were you there, when they crucified my Lord? Where you there when they crucified my Lord? Oh! Sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Where you there, when they crucified my Lord?”

On Palm Sunday, as we read the Passion of our Lord, I often think of this great spiritual hymn. I imagine myself standing there, watching Him as they lead Him up to the crest of Calvary. *“The Son of God goes forth to die!”* He climbs that hill – bloody, beaten, scourged, to die for me. Knowing me and my sins almost 2,000 years before I was even born, He offers His life for me.

“Were you there, when they nailed Him to the tree? Where you there when they nailed Him to the tree? Oh! Sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Where you there, when they nailed Him to the tree?”

I watch as they nail His hands; the hands that He used to bless and heal the blind, the lame, the deaf, the lepers. Then they nail his feet, the feet that walked by the shores of Galilee, through the streets of Cana, through the Temple at Jerusalem; the feet that walked upon the water, nailed to that tree. Nailed there for me and my sins, and for the sins of all mankind.

“Were you there, when they laid Him in the tomb? Were you there, when they laid Him in the tomb? Oh! Sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there, when they laid Him in the Tomb?”

He dies for you and me. They take Him down from that tree. They lay him in His mother's arms. How painful it must have been for Mary. Looking down, holding the broken body of her son. The son she lovingly raised and nurtured in obedience to God's will, told her by the Angel. She knew that He was born to save His people, that God had given His only begotten Son to save the lost, the sinful, the generations of those who would forget Him. Simeon had warned her, "*Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also.*" How painfully those words must have returned to her now. Her beautiful Son, dying for those who would ignore His teachings, neglect their duties to God, and only remember His sacrifice in times of trouble. People like us – you and me.

The Gospel tells us that darkness fell over the whole land. The darkness of those who have no hope or whose hope is lost.

Every morning when I prepare to go to work, it is still dark. I look out my second-floor window and the world outside is covered in darkness except where a post light or street lamp sheds man-made light over a very small area. But as I watch, out my window, as the sun starts to come up, there is one tree on the hill by my house that catches the very first rays of dawn, shining brightly above all that darkness, giving light to the world. Then the sunlight spreads to the other trees on that hill; a hillside of light and luster above the streets of darkness below. But gradually, as the sun continues to rise, that light spreads to my street and my neighborhood overcoming all the insignificant man-made light with the glory of its radiance. A total transformation from darkness to light, starting from a single tree on a lonely hill. The Gospel story brought to life every morning from my second-floor window.

The noted evangelist and author, Tony Campolo, told a story about being in a Church in Harlem where they were celebrating the 100th birthday of the Pastor

Emeritus. The frail, elderly gentleman stepped carefully up to the podium to deliver the Sermon. He looked out over the congregation and in a deep, strong voice that belied his frail appearance, he called out to those assembled, “Its Friday, but Sunday’s coming!” Its Friday, but Sunday’s coming over, and over again.

The darkness of hate, oppression, and despair that gripped the Apostles, Mary, and those around the Cross on that Friday night, was completely obliterated by the glorious revelation of the empty tomb, the light of Christ shining into the world to destroy the darkness of eternal death and bring us to the light of grace, of divine mercy, and of everlasting life.

As we stand today in the shadow of the Cross, we can let ourselves be overcome by the darkness of the world, having a false sense of security from the man-made light of false promises and complacency, trying to hide from the darkness in the dim lit recesses of self-reliance and self-importance, or we can choose to walk in the revealed light of Christ, spreading out from the light of the empty tree made glorious by the Resurrection, spreading through those closest to him, those who open their hearts to him to lighten the world around us. The choice is ours: we can either dwell in the darkness, or we can be the light! *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”*

+In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.