

A LETTER FROM FATHER DANIEL CARUSO

4/5/2020

Dear Friends,

Today we celebrate Palm Sunday, the start of another Holy Week, the beginning of our yearly journey with Jesus through the last days of His life, as we remember His Passion, His Death and His Glorious Resurrection. Yet the journey this year is unlike any previous journey we have made through these sacred days. The pandemic the world is experiencing prevents us from gathering together in our churches to remember and to pray. However, this is the perfect opportunity to remember that the mysteries we celebrate this week aren't to be confined to a specific building, but rather, are to shape the very way we live, no matter who we are or where we are.

The liturgy for Palm Sunday actually has two Gospel readings; the first one is at the beginning of Mass as part of the ceremony to bless the palms. This Gospel reading is one of the accounts of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday. The other Gospel reading takes place at the normal point in the Mass and it is one of the accounts of the Passion. What has always been most striking to me is that the crowds who welcomed Jesus as their King on that first Palm Sunday were the same crowds who on Good Friday called for His Crucifixion. I have often reflected on, in my private prayer in in my preaching, how we have the same choice in our daily lives: to acknowledge Jesus as our King by seeking to conform our will to His or to cry out for His crucifixion by our sins. I really do believe this is something that we need to remember and reflect on often; I know that for me, personally, these last few weeks I have realized how often in my life I have failed to welcome Jesus as my King and instead, in my pride, in my selfishness, in my sin, called out for His Crucifixion. Having said all that, as I was preparing for Palm Sunday this year, I kept going back to the fact that not all those who welcomed Jesus as King called out for His crucifixion. There were some who remained faithful. I can't help but to think of Our Blessed Mother, St. John, and Joseph of Arimathea. The other Apostles, with the exception of Judas who betrayed Our Lord, may have distanced themselves from Jesus out of fear, but they continued to love Him. We can judge them because of their lack of faith, but I have come to realize that, in their own way, they shared in the Passion that first Holy Week. Imagine how they suffered: The One in whom they had placed their hope was arrested, scourged and crucified; they had lost a dear friend; they had to live with the

fact that in the end they failed to be there for Him; in the matter of a few days, their world came crashing down on them.

This year, just like the apostles, we are being asked to share in the Passion in a profound way. We may struggle with a lack of faith at times, but ultimately our love for Jesus must see us through. Fear is very much a part of our lives right now, but we know something that the disciples didn't know: we know how the story of Jesus ends. We know that death was not victorious on that first Good Friday. Jesus rose from the tomb on Easter and the power of death was destroyed forever.

As we walk with Jesus this year, we will be sharing in His Passion; we will know suffering, sacrifice, and death to self. Let us unite whatever suffering we have with the suffering of Jesus; let us pray for the Grace to remain faithful to Him; and let us find hope in the Resurrection and New Life that completed Jesus' journey and awaits each of us.

You all remain in my prayers; please keep me in yours.

In Christ, Fr. Caruso