

Passion (Palm) Sunday (Matt 27:11-54)

Our Gospel reading today is very long. It tells of the arrest, trial and crucifixion of Jesus. We hear of sinfulness and sinful people, Judas, Peter, and Pilate. Let's see if anything about these three may bear some resemblance to us.

The contribution of Judas to the crucifixion of Jesus was personal ambition. We have no idea why Jesus invited him to join his group of followers or why he accepted the invitation. During the three years he was with Jesus, did he just hang around on the edges and watch, or did he take an active part in the ministry? And what was his reason for betraying Jesus to his enemies? That's a mystery. I'm not sure he did it just for the money, but I think his aspirations far exceeded the thirty pieces of silver. Perhaps he was driven by personal ambition to use Jesus to further his goal that the hated Romans must be driven out, and Judas became disillusioned when Jesus proved to be a Messiah of a different kind.

And then Peter played a part in the tragedy. His contribution was cowardice. You know the story about his triple denial of Jesus. It became no longer popular to follow Jesus and to be known as such. He was a wishy-washy disciple. When the going got tough, he looked for an easier way. Perhaps this is our temptation as well. And we can repent as Peter did.

Pilate's part in the crucifixion of Jesus was expedience. He was the only man in town who could impart a sentence of capital punishment, but he didn't want to do it. He succumbed to the pressure of the screaming crowds. Pilate had no central core of integrity that could not be compromised, he followed the line of political correctness.

Personal ambition, cowardice, and expedience in the face of political correctness. Has much changed in the last two thousand years? Sinfulness remains, and Jesus continues to offer himself in this representation and remembrance of the sacrifice of Calvary. We gather to give thanks for his liberating love for us, a liberation from all the sinfulness that pulls us down. And our response is gratitude, is Eucharist.

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