

PASSION (PALM) SUNDAY

On Palm Sunday 2020, we were unable to ritualise the passion and death of Jesus the Christ because of COVID-19 shut-downs across the world. On that day I found a crumbling piece of palm in my bible and remembered the years past when I stumbled along in a country church while singing a disjointed version of "Hail Redeemer" as we left the open space to enter the church building. I also found a piece of palm in my screen door where a neighbour had put it from her garden. What a contrast to times past. Like millions of others, I watched a version of Palm Sunday on my iPad. Our approach to ritualising Jesus' passion, death and resurrection was wrenched away from us.

COVID put an end to our control of doing most things. Instead, we experience uncertainty, masks, border closures, shutdowns, declaration of hot spots and limitations to our movements. In Mark's gospel Jesus was busy until the moment of his arrest. At that moment, like us in our COVID experience, Jesus lost control of his life. He entered an experience of being helpless as others made decisions about his life and ultimately, his death.

After listening to David Suchet read the gospel of Mark on YouTube, I became aware of how active Jesus was. The account has him traversing the country on water and land, teaching the Twelve and disciples, both men and women, preaching and working miracles at a fast pace. Listening to

the reading gave me insight into a man whose mission prevented him from pausing for too long anywhere. It was through his communion with God in prayer that Jesus was able to work for the Kingdom and to let it all go in trust as he faced betrayal and denial, hatred of Temple leaders, physical cruelty and intense suffering on a cross.

Two things come to mind as I reflect on Jesus at this time of his life. I wonder where did he learn this wisdom? Did he see in Joseph a model of the 'quiet man' who got things done and then let go? The second thing is the 27th Chapter invitation to "attend to our personal and communal loss, pain and hurt and believe that even in our vulnerability we have enough strength and resilience" in these difficult days.

I pray with Pope Francis in this Year of St Joseph:

"... Blessed Joseph, to us too,

show yourself a father

and guide us in the path of life.

Obtain for us grace, mercy, and courage,

and defend us from every evil".

May Palm Sunday 2021, limited though it may be by spacing and numbers, lead us further into the spiral of 'letting go and letting God', thus contributing to the salvation of the world.

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