

Palm Sunday 2020

A Holy Week Reflection

~ from Resurrection Chaplin Father Dan McCarthy
to the Resurrection College Prep High School community

Over the last month or so, our lives have been completely turned upside down by Covid-19. Even on Ash Wednesday, who would have ever thought that schools would go to on-line learning, stores & restaurants would close, the Kennedy would have almost no traffic even during rush hour, that so many people would be working from home? It's been unlike anything any of us have ever experienced! Most of us are now confused, upset about who & what we're missing. We're bored, maybe a bit scared...

With all that going on, today we begin Holy Week, a real roller coaster week for Jesus! This week we hear once again the story of the suffering, death & Resurrection of Jesus. But what makes this week really special, or "holy" for us is how it reflects our own lives, our own roller coaster, with its ups & downs; peaks, valleys & plateaus; good days, bad days & ordinary days!

Holy Week starts today with Palm Sunday, a good day. The roller coaster is definitely going up for Jesus. He comes to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. He's welcomed. Crowds are cheering. People throw their cloaks on the ground & wave palm branches in front of him, signs of respect for all the good they've heard about him. Jesus is happy. So is everyone else!

We have our own good days too: Dad gets a raise. Mom gets a promotion. Your BFF is great to talk to. You make the Honor Roll. Your "special guy" asks you to Prom...if there is one! You just feel so good! The roller coaster is going up!

Monday & Tuesday of Holy Week are just ordinary, like most days. Nothing special is going on for Jesus & his Apostles. Most of our days are "ordinary" too, routine: wake up, get ready, school, job or sports, dinner, family time, homework, bed...just another day! The roller coaster has reached a plateau.

Wednesday of Holy Week, "Spy Wednesday," is pretty ordinary too, but clouds begin to gather for Jesus. The Apostle Judas is "looking for a chance to betray him."

We see clouds gather in life too. Your best friend spends a lot of time with other people. Your mom & dad have more serious conversations with each other than usual. Your grandma starts forgetting stuff or repeating herself a lot. Is the roller coaster starting to go in the wrong direction?

Thursday is "Holy Thursday," the start of the Sacred Triduum, the sacred 3 days from Thursday evening to Sunday evening that get to the heart of the story of Jesus here on earth. He celebrates the Passover meal with the Apostles, except for Judas who betrayed him for 30 pieces of silver. At the meal, his Last Supper, Jesus blesses bread & wine, tells the Apostles: "This is my Body. This is my Blood. Do this in memory of me." He has given them their instructions on what to do when he is gone: they are to tell his story & to share his Body & Blood. He ends Thursday by going out to the garden to pray quietly with Peter, James & John. They fall asleep...a great disappointment; Judas comes with a mob to arrest him...a crushing blow. The roller coaster was rising at the Last Supper, then falling with his betrayal & arrest.

We have days when we don't know where the roller coaster of life is taking us too. We don't know whether to be glad or sad. We're not sure what's going on, whom to believe, why we feel the way we do, where we're going, what's expected of us. Friday is "Good Friday," good for us, but certainly not for Jesus. It is the saddest of Christian days. Jesus is tortured & killed in such a vicious, painful way that the Roman government didn't allow its own citizens to endure it. It would take Jesus 3 hours to die!

We all have Good Fridays in our own lives too. A nasty breakup! Dad suffers a job loss! Grandpa loses his battle with Cancer! Will Covid-19 ever go away & let life return to normal? The roller coaster of life has hit rock bottom. Is there any hope at all?

Saturday of this week is Holy Saturday, a day when the Apostles, his mother & his friends could only watch & wait. He'd said he would die & rise 3 days later. Was there a chance?

After the tough breakup, there are still good guys out there. There must be better jobs for dad. There's no more pain or suffering for grandpa...might the roller coaster go back uphill again?

Next Sunday is Easter Sunday. Jesus' best friend, Mary Magdalene goes to his tomb...and finds it empty! Peter & John come later & see it too...empty. An Angel appears to tell them, "He has risen as he said!" Halleluia! It's all true, everything he taught. There's hope! There's always hope for those who believe.

We may see him & find that hope on a Kairos Retreat, or when we sit by ourselves in quiet conversation with the Lord. We may pick up the Light from a friend or a family member who is so enthusiastic about Him that we know she's right. We can see it in a crowded church on Sunday...filled with people who believe his story. We clearly see it in our own lives in times of success, in times of love, in times of joy, in times of forgiveness, in times of generosity. Because of Jesus' Resurrection, life's roller coaster is as high as it can go!

The Holy Week & Easter story brings new life. It brings hope. What is essential to remember during Holy Week, and during life, is that for every Good Friday of suffering & death, for people of faith there is always a brilliant Easter of hope & joy close behind. Have a good Palm Sunday, Res family, have a great Holy Week and enjoy the view from the top of the roller coaster on Easter Sunday!

My prayers for you all. I miss you & look forward to seeing you again very soon!