

## FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters



Last year I threw my back out. I bent down to pick something up, and was suddenly crippled in agony. Turns out this is a common thing in middle aged men! The cause, I discovered, was a lack of core strength – something we hear a lot about today. The solution? Gyms invite us to take out a membership, or we can join spinning classes, or sign up for Cross Fit, all in the name of building core strength. But these things are only a temporary fix.

Today's liturgy offers us the real answer. The palms which we receive today, Palm Sunday, are single leaves from the palm branch. The Palm branch looks like a spinal column, it is a symbol of Faith. Our standing upright, our core strength, comes not from the Gym, or Cross Fit, or bodily exercise, but from the Faith which we profess. Without our Faith we become crippled!

Holy Week comes to give us faith, it is an exercise which can allow us to stand upright. We will hold our palms aloft, and sing Hosanna – which means Blessed be God! This acclamation of blessing is found on the lips of all who are witnesses to God's action in their lives. He has stooped down to fallen humanity, taking the form of a servant, and more than that, the form of one who is despised, and ultimately crucified.

The liturgy is not a theatrical re-enactment of past events! We are invited to actively participate in the Mystery of our Faith. Christ entered into the Holy City of Jerusalem, knowing that the crowds' acclamations of 'Hosanna in the Highest' would turn to cries of 'Crucify Him, Crucify Him!' This fact is made present for us today. Our reading of the Passion makes present the truth that we have individually allowed him to be crucified.

When?

Every time we lacked charity, or were selfish, or mean spirited.

Each time we lacked forgiveness and forbearance.

Every time we harbored ill will in our thoughts and deeds.

These are the things that really cripple us.

The liturgy encompasses us all. We can, and should, say 'Mea Culpa!' 'I am guilty!'

But this is not the last word. The great love which God has for us is made manifest in the liturgies of Holy Week.

Christ was condemned crucified and buried. But death is unable to hold him.

The love of God is the only thing that can vanquish death itself, and consequently the only thing which is able to forgive the transgressor. It is the only thing which can allow the crippled to stand upright!

The Gospel can be summarized in two phrases: 'Love your enemies' and 'I am coming soon.' Christ Jesus has made an appointment with each of us this Holy Week. He has loved us when we were his enemies, and he has promised to come to us this week. May today's celebration lead us to truly experience the Paschal Mystery, that we who are crippled may stand upright. Just as we have partaken in his death, we also may become witnesses and bearers of his Resurrection.

Fr. Sean