

Tuesday of Holy Week: 2nd April 2023

“Christ Crucified: the Power of God and the Wisdom of God.”

“For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified.” (1 Cor. 1: 22-3).

+In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Holy week is not what we expect. The messianic state procession happened on Sunday; there was no pomp and circumstance; no militarism; no apparent proclamation; merely the mounting of a colt by a simple Nazorean tradesman with a few palm branches for his red carpet. “His disciples,” the writer of John’s gospel tells us, “did not understand these things at first... but when Jesus was glorified then they remembered.” (Jn. 12: 16). They were disappointed, but they remembered.

Today’s excerpt from John’s gospel unfurls Jesus’s way that bit further. And he is not what we expect, for he seems to pervert the course of Messiahship utterly. Our Lord is a disappointment, even a disgrace. But this way, St. James reminds us, is to be the fulfilment of the royal law of love – foolish to the world. “A stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to gentiles” as St. Paul for his part, reminds the Corinthian church today. (1 Cor. 1: 23).

This Messiahship promotes a reign of justice, peace and merciful judgment which will not simply restore Israel, but recreate it in the blessed arms outstretched to arraign all things straight.

This Messiahship promotes healing and flourishing for the human condition; it is a humane remembering in the sacrifice of the Father’s only-begotten Son, that will check out in a cosmic reordering in the final judgment of things at the Parousia of God.

No, we do not expect him; we expect so immeasurably more. Where is Jesus’s fight, his spunk, his pluck? But when he is glorified at the completion of this week – this harrowing week with its miniaturisation of all ultimate things: death, judgment, heaven and hell, compressing them as it does into the boundaries of space-time, then we too shall see him as these disciples come to; we also shall come to; we shall come to see him; we shall come to see him as he is; we shall come to see him as he is because we cannot see him as another. Our eyes will behold with Mary and Job the righteous and the beloved John. We shall see

the invention – the ‘coming to’ us of that cross, and in going to die with him there at Calvary, we will like the twelve remember, even as we are remembered; we will be recreated with him in that new world, with the penitent thief for the life we cannot yet understand, but which then we will know fully and into eternity, even as we are fully known.

We were not expecting this week to see this infant lowly grow up in every way to be so immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine. No, Holy Week and its royal way, its coming Messiah, bringing us to ourselves, bringing us home, are not what we expect. But all its unexpectedness, its perversity and disappointment draw the universe to one embrace – to fulfil all the law and the prophets in the only way that has any meaning: the royal way whose mandate is love, whose ways are ways of gentleness, whose paths are ever peace.

Love crucified: the *logos* – word and wisdom and divine reason of God become man for us that we may bear fruit in plenty – the baptismal fruit of fire and spirit that completes in death and resurrection, the fruit that is worthy of repentance – the fruit of joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control. The fruit that reaps a harvest of love for love outpoured. The everlasting fruit who offers its seed to the ground in apparent foolishness, that all may have life, and have it abundantly. The fruit which burgeons on the tree we could not have expected and cannot understand, but that is the power of God working in and through God’s Holy Spirit for the flourishing of our universal life. The life whose light the darkness has not overcome.

I wonder if you have that life in you? Perhaps you need to ask for it today, anew, again. Perhaps you need to pray for a renewing of resurrection hope amidst the trials of your own Passiontide during this Holy, this harrowing, this surprising week. And perhaps you need to let the God of surprises surprise you once more with the generous blessings of his loving-kindness that is for you as it is for all people. If that is the case, then great.

That’s exactly what the Chrism Eucharist will encourage us to do this Thursday, to renew ourselves in the wide variety of our gifts and ministries by Word and Sacrament; that’s fundamentally what the whole of this week must be about, as we are drawn day by day,

grace by unmerited grace into the wideness of that generative covenant relationship who is God in three persons, manifested in the flesh and blood passion of his Son.

Do try to get to the cathedral or to the 10'o clock Mass at Woodbridge. Receive to yourself the bread of salvation and the wine of renewed hope. It is the same wine, the same oil of love we saw Mary pour out for her Lord in yesterday's gospel; and it contains that same life which we shall yet see poured out in perpetuity for us and for many for the forgiveness of sins every time we are communicated with the Lord in prayerful, confessional Eucharistic reception. But first, the vine-fruits must needs be grafted, rooted, and renewed in the vine.

May it be so in this week for the whole Church, the first fruits of that unexpected flourishing power whose wisdom passes all understanding, but whose mystery strengthens and urges us onward in this foolish way that Holy Week brings to birth, as it opens, renews, grounded and finally resurrects all creation in the perverse wisdom of the wondrous cross.

God grant that I have spoken to you in his name, Father Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN