

Homily Outline for the Palm Sunday Mass - Cycle A
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
April 2, 2023

† Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois

- I. Every year we read the Passion narrative on Palm Sunday and Good Friday.
 - A. The Good Friday reading of the Passion of the Lord is always from St. John.
 - B. Palm Sunday's reading of the Passion of the Lord follows a 3-year cycle of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.
 - C. This year's reading of the Passion is from St Matthew.

- II. We actually had two Gospel readings today, both from St Matthew.
 - A. The reading for the blessing of Palms tells of our Lord's glorious entrance into Jerusalem, while the crowds cheer and acclaim Him as a prophet.
 - B. The mood changes dramatically in the reading of Our Lord's Passion from the Gospel of St. Matthew, which starts with the betrayal of Judas.
 - C. Every time we read these scriptures, something else may strike us; what caught my attention this time was what Jesus did not say.
 1. After Jesus was arrested, He was brought before the high priest, who rose and asked Him, "Have you no answer? What are these men testifying against you?" But Jesus was silent.
 2. Then we are told that some people "spat in his face and struck him, while some slapped him." The Gospel does not record Jesus making any response.
 3. When He was brought for questioning to the Governor, Pontius Pilate, Jesus was accused by the chief priests and elders, but He made no answer. Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many things they are testifying against you?" But Jesus did not answer him one word, so that the governor was greatly amazed.
 - D. What do we make of His silence?
 1. Jesus does not protest because He knows and has accepted His mission as our Savior.

2. Perhaps Jesus is also showing us that we should not expect Him to respond to our every question with simple answers; we must search deeper for meaning.
3. Jesus experiences this Himself as He is dying on the cross: He cries out to His Heavenly Father, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

III. How often have we felt the same way when beset with some misfortune?

- A. We pray to God, and we seem to hear no answer.
- B. We also may ask, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"
- C. If so, we are not the first to ask that question, and neither was Jesus.
- D. In fact, Jesus is reciting the opening lines of Psalm 22, that we sang today as our Responsorial Psalm.
- E. What is noteworthy is that Psalm 22 does not end in despair, but in fact goes on to "offer praise in the great assembly" and proclaim that "those who seek the LORD will offer praise." Despite their misfortunes, the people continue to place their trust in God, who fulfills their hopes in the end.

IV. Of course, we know that our Lord's trust in His Father is rewarded in His resurrection from the dead, which we celebrate next Sunday.

- A. We call this week Holy Week because it is the most holy week of the year.
 1. I strongly encourage you to attend all the liturgical services of the Triduum: the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday at 6:30 PM, the Good Friday Liturgy at 3:00 PM, and the Easter Vigil on Saturday night at 8 o'clock.
 2. When I was a child, long before I became a priest, it was understood and accepted in our family that we would attend all of the liturgical services of the Paschal Triduum.
 3. Otherwise, Easter would just not have been the same.
- B. By celebrating the entire Paschal Triduum, we will have a greater appreciation for the celebration of our Lord's resurrection on Easter Sunday!

V. May God give us this grace. Amen.