

'JESUS EAGERLY DESIRES YOUR COMPANY THIS EASTER'

Holy Week - Palm Sunday – 14th April 2019

SIMON OF CYRENE

As we now prepare to journey through the holiest week of the Christian Year,
we are invited to accompany Jesus and others in prayer.

In today's Gospel passage we hear about Jesus:

'As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus.'

HOW DID SIMON OF CYRENE FIND THE EXPERIENCE?

WAS HE MOVED BY THE PAIN OF JESUS?

He is not an anonymous person.

His name has been remembered by the early Christian community.

WE ARE INVITED TO ACCOMPANY JESUS & OTHERS IN PRAYER

WHO HELPS US TO CARRY OUR CROSS?

WHO JOURNEYS WITH US IN SUCH A WAY?

WHO ACCOMPANIES US?

Let us name them and pray for them today

WHOSE CROSS DO WE HELP CARRY?

WITH WHOM DO WE JOURNEY IN SUCH A WAY?

WHO DO WE ACCOMPANY?

A LOVED ONE?

A NEIGHBOUR?

Let us name them and pray for them today.

ALZHEIMER'S & A MERCY VISIT

Last Friday Pope Francis made a surprise visit to Emanuele Village in northern Rome. It is designed in ways to help people who have Alzheimer's.

A Vatican News article about the visit said:

"Upon his arrival, the Pope was greeted with amazement by the residents and staff in the courtyard of the Village. He then spoke to those present, exchanging words of comfort with each of them. With this visit, Pope Francis wanted to draw attention to the conditions of exclusion and loneliness that a disease like Alzheimer's risks generating in people who are often left alone by society. The progressive increase in life expectancy also calls for greater awareness and respect for the needs and dignity of those who live with this disease."

The article quoted the words of Pope Francis on September 21st, 2016

"I invite everyone to remember, with the solicitude of Mary and with the tenderness of the Merciful Jesus, those affected by this disease,

*together with their families.
We also pray for the people who are close to the sick,
knowing how to grasp their needs, even the most imperceptible ones,
because they are seen with eyes full of love".*

We pause to name and pray for those we know who suffer any illness. [PAUSE]

GOSPEL OF LUKE

We approach today with mercy and compassion.
Today's passage **LUKE 22:14 – 23:56** is a long quotation.
We don't have to rush our reflection.
We have all week to ponder it.

THE GOOD THIEF

From this passage we recall:

*'One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him
and saying, 'Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!'
But the other rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God,
since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?
And we indeed have been condemned justly,
for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds,
but this man has done nothing wrong.'
Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.'
He replied,
'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'*

The Good Thief advocates for Jesus on the cross.
Even in pain, he defends the innocence of Jesus.
He ends up **accompanying** Jesus on the cross.
And Jesus **accompanies** him on the cross.
And Jesus promises and assures him that today
he will be in his presence in Paradise.
Jesus accompanies him forever.

THE LAST SUPPER

We read from the passage about the Last Supper.

*'When the hour came, he took his place at the table,
and the apostles with him.
He said to them,
**'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer;
for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.'**
Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said,
**'Take this and divide it among yourselves;
for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine
until the kingdom of God comes.'**
Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks,
he broke it and gave it to them, saying,*

'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'
And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying,
'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.'

JESUS EAGERLY DESIRES

We now put down the text and relate what we remember so well to another person. And we remember the words of Jesus as he said:

'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.'

Literally from the Greek it says *'with desire I desired'*

The text translates this double stressing of *'desire'* as *'eagerly desired'*.

Jesus desires so, so much to celebrate the Passover with them before he suffers.

It is so important that he celebrates the Passover with his disciples.

It is at the Passover that he gifts us with himself in the Eucharist.

It doesn't say that he was just doing his duty.

It doesn't say that this was one of the tasks that he had to do.

He doesn't say that he eats the Passover under sufferance.

True love is not just going through the motions.

For example, the way a couple look at each other in the wedding vows.

Though they might be somewhat nervous with others present,

they gaze deeply into each other's eyes,

with loving and committed **desire**, they **desire** each other wholeheartedly.

Let us come back to the passage and imagine Jesus.

Even though Judas will betray him, and Peter deny him,

Jesus eagerly desired their presence.

WHAT IS HIS TONE OF VOICE IN THE PASSAGE?

HOW DOES HE GAZE UPON THE DISCIPLES?

WHAT BODY POSTURE DOES HE HAVE?

Let us pause and spend a moment with this picture.

THIS HOLY WEEK

HOW DOES JESUS EAGERLY DESIRE US THIS WEEK?

This week we begin with today's *Palm Sunday* procession

and **proclaiming the long Passion** reading in the Gospel of Luke 22:14 – 23:56,

and journey through *Holy Thursday*,

(remembering the eating of the Passover and listening to the Scriptures,

the gifting of himself as body and blood in Eucharist, the inspiring example of service in washing the feet of the disciples, and the time in the garden in prayer)

to *Good Friday*,

(remembering how he suffered and died for us, to save us)

and to *Holy Saturday evening* and *Easter Sunday morning*,

(remembering his rising from the dead and offering us the fullness of eternal life).

We don't just 'go through the motions' of *Holy Week*.

**We respond to the eager desire of Jesus
for us to accompany him in this holiest of weeks.**

Jesus said,

'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.'

We highlight the words '*with you*'.

This Holy Week, Jesus eagerly desires that **we** accompany him
and he accompanies us.

Reflecting on

- ± Simon of Cyrene accompanying Jesus physically,
- ± the sinful Good Thief accompanying Jesus in advocacy,
- ± the eager desire of Jesus in Eucharist that we accompany him

Let us willingly and wholeheartedly accept the invitation

- ± to accompany Jesus
- ± and to help others carry their cross
- ± this Holy Week.

Let us pray.

Fr. Gerry

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/041419.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook14042019>]

Jean-Hippolyte Flandrin | Christ's Entry into Jerusalem | public domain

