

## **PALM SUNDAY 2018**

*"Truly this man was the Son of God"* (Mk 15:39)

These words proclaimed by the centurion as Jesus breathed His last represent the punchline of the Gospel – for it answers the question lingering throughout the Gospel of Mark: "who is this man".

Truly, He was the Son of God for in obedience to His Father, Jesus humbled himself, even to death, death on the cross, so completing His Father's will.

One might wonder: Why did God choose this way, that His Son would die a brutal, agonising death on the cross? Was there not a cleaner, easier way for the all-powerful God to accomplish His purposes?

Of course there was, but God chose this way for good reason.

For on the cross, Jesus took upon Himself, and absorbed all the violence and hatred of the world. As His last drop of blood soaked the ground at the foot of the cross, a line was drawn in the sand – no more blood needed to be shed.

Revenge and retribution met its match that day. Never again would violence, hatred and oppression have the last word. Through offering no resistance to the evil inflicted upon Him, Jesus, once and for all, stopped the cycle of violence – and that was His Father will. Hence, the centurion in wonder and awe could say: "Truly this man was the Son of God"

The brutal and treacherous events around that day on Calvary are not distant or far removed from us. The Word of God is always like a mirror in which we view ourselves. The events of that day long ago continue to speak to us and challenge our own assumptions, our own darkness, the violence we may be prone to. We live in very violent times. Besides the obvious and appalling acts of violence and bloodshed reported on the daily news, the tone expressed in Facebook exchanges and comments, and the so-called twitter wars, reveal a rage often bubbling beneath the surface.

Violence begets violence – blood begets more blood, for the urge is always there to respond. Violence is not out there - it has its beginning

and its end within the human heart. Each of us during our journeys of life have picked up some unwanted baggage along the way, we may have sustained injuries along the way, and still bear those wounds.

If the violence, pain, and brokenness within us is not healed and transformed, it is transmitted; it is transmitted out of us, into our family, our community, and to whoever crosses our path – and so begins another destructive cycle. For what is in the heart never quite stays there – sooner or later it emerges, damaging ourselves and those around us.

Each of us have the capacity to violence and evil, but we have the capacity also to show great courage and love.

Each time, when we are tempted to strike out at another, but instead, turn the other cheek – we break that cycle. Each time, through God's grace we forgive another, letting go of a simmering resentment, we set ourselves free from bondage. Each time, instead of lashing out with our tongue with hate speech or gossip, and hold our tongue instead, we break that cycle. Each time we confront and challenge the injustices and situations of abuse we encounter, we draw a line in the sand. Each time we treat another person with dignity and respect, welcoming the outsider, sharing our resources with those who do not have, we build bridges, not dead-ends.

Jesus, by absorbing the violence and aggression on the cross gave us not only the supreme example of self-giving love, but the *means* to achieve His purposes: For the night before He was to die, he left us His own body and blood, with the instruction to continue this sacrifice on the altar. We do this over and over again for it continually reminds us that through Jesus' death on the cross, blood need never be shed again.

