

Column0323

Companions on the Journey

March , 2023

Dear Friends,

Next Sunday is Palm Sunday, the entry point to the one week each year that we designate as Holy. I have always found that designation intriguing because when I think of holy, I picture, simple, goodness, quietness (even silence), harmony, closeness to the God of Life and Love. But when I read the gospel accounts about what transpired in the life of Jesus and in the city of Jerusalem and the Kingdom of Israel, the word holy is not what comes to mind.

There is the humble but dramatic entry into Jerusalem by Jesus of Nazareth while many of his followers hailed him as the long-awaited Messiah. They laid their cloaks along the path he was to travel. They took down branches of palm from the trees along the way and they laid those branches before him as well. They cried out. They sang. "Hosannah to the Son of David!" All the pilgrims and travelers that had come to Jerusalem for Passover were enthralled and abuzz with this happening. That included the powerful amount the religious class and the ruling class in Israel. Jesus was just too much of a threat to their livelihood and to their power base. It had grown very clear. He would just have to be eliminated.

And eliminated he was. There was the cleansing of the Temple. The overturning of the money changers tables. The scattering of coins and the removal of animals. There was the Last Supper of Jesus and the Twelve where he washed their feet, taught them, changed bread into his body and wine into his blood. He designated them to "Do this in memory of me."

They went out from that Upper Room. Judas went to betray, The others went with Jesus ostensibly to keep watch and pray with him but in reality to fall asleep. Jesus is brutally betrayed and arrested and hailed before the High Priest in an unlawful Night Council meeting. He is condemned and imprisoned over night so as to be presented to Pontius Pilate, the Roman Procurator early the next morning for condemnation.

Pilate has him scourged. The crowd jeers wildly for his blood, and his crucifixion. The soldiers crown him with thorns and mock him with a royal discarded cloak. They force him to carry his own instrument of torture and death. He is ridiculed, spat upon, beaten. He falls. Again and again. Finally, he arrives at the place of his crucifixion and death. They nail him and hoist him and taunt him. He, on his part, calls on his Father to forgive them. Commends his mother into the care of his beloved disciple John, and promises paradise to the good thief hanging next to him. He then commends his Spirit and the ominous dark clouds swirl and the rain descends in sheets and the thunder and lightning strikes crash all around. They take him down and hastily bury him in another man's grave.

All that. And they call this week holy? But the week doesn't end that way, does it? There is more of the story to come.

Peace,

Msgr. McHenry