

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Palm Sunday – Passion Sunday! This weekend we celebrate the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem! The crowds cry out:

**Hosanna to the Son of David;
blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord;
hosanna in the highest.** (Matthew 21:9)

They cry out with praise! They cry out with joy! They cry out with hope and expectation! And then, later in the same Mass (less than a week later), we read the Passion according to Matthew, and the tone changes drastically:

He deserved to die! (Matthew 26: 66)

Let him be crucified! (Matthew 27: 22 & 23)

The crowds are fickle! When Jesus gives them what they want, they rejoice. When He challenges them, they want Him dead. It reminds me of a young child who, after being told he cannot have the toy he wants, says, “You’re the worst mommy in the world!”

What does our relationship with God look like? Are we seeking Him only because He gives us what we want (or we hope He will)? Or do we seek Jesus because He is Lord, and we know He is good and will give us what we *need* (even if it’s not what we want)?

The mystery of today’s celebration is that God gives us *more* than we could ever *dare to ask!* He gives us His very life. Jesus chooses to die for us to set us free from sin, not because His death was required by a maniacal God, but because this was the clearest, most profound way that He could show His love for us. He could have *declared* us guiltless by Divine Decree. Jesus chooses to die in a most horrific manner – even feeling the depths of atheism in His pain, “**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**” (Matthew 27:46) – to save us from sin. He does this so that we could see, concretely, that God loves us this much. The lie that God is against us – that His moral requirements are hoops to jump through, or, worse, they are there as an unattainable goal to cause us misery in this life and so prove our love for God – this LIE Jesus exposes in the Cross! No, God is not against us. He does not will evil for us. He does not want to make us miserable. Jesus’ choice to die on the Cross is the most eloquent way of showing us that God will do **ANYTHING** to make a path for us to come back to Him. His Resurrection shows us that no matter what God asks of us, He will give us what we need to accomplish it – even if it seems as impossible as rising from the dead! God will not leave us orphan – He is with us, calling us to greatness in His life.

So back to that question I asked earlier: What does our relationship with God look like? Most of us claim to believe in God, but are we practical atheists? If people were to examine our lives – from our actions, our interests, what we say, what we post on social media, what entertainment we enjoy – or avoid – would they be able to tell that we believe in a God who loves us so much, He died for us? There are 168 hours in a week. If people were to look at how we prioritize our time, would they see that we believe that one hour at Mass on Sunday (or Saturday evening) is *worth more* than the other 167 hours combined?

Are our lives:

Hosanna!

Or are they:

Let him be crucified!