

V LENT 2017

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

St. JOHN 8.46



Things have really started to heat up. Jesus has just identified himself by the name reserved for God...**I AM**. The people want to throw stones at him. It's time for a hasty retreat...it's time for Jesus to go into hiding.

Passiontide is the name for the last two weeks of Lent beginning with today...Passion Sunday...and continuing through Easter Even. The custom of covering crucifixes, statues and icons with purple veils during Passiontide is associated with the Gospel...Jesus hid himself from the people.

The *passion* part of *Passiontide* means endurance and suffering. Jesus knew what was ahead for him...and his encounters with the people...especially the religious leaders who had come to despise him...only get more contentious.

Jesus will continue to teach and heal people... but from now until Good Friday he will spend most of his time with his disciples...away from the crowds...hiding in a sense...until it was time for him to complete his mission.

Our liturgical reenactments during Holy Week are much more than something we endure and suffer through on our way to Easter Sunday. They can have real meaning to us if we see ourselves in the characters we read about in Holy Scripture.

Next Sunday...Palm Sunday...we will be the crowd welcoming King Jesus. We will take our blessed palms in hand and process around the church. We might remember the prophet Zechariah wrote about 600 years earlier our King would come to his people riding on a donkey.

A lot of things are going to happen over the next few days. We follow Jesus and watch him go the Temple and turn over the currency exchange tables. We don't like their unfair business practice...but we wonder why Jesus did that and where this is going. What we see are the Pharisees getting angrier by the minute and we learn they are trying to figure out a way they can legally get King Jesus executed.

The week has gone by quickly and it's now the first Maundy Thursday. We are Jesus' disciples sitting around a table. We watch as he takes bread and wine and blesses them. This is no ordinary meal...Jesus says we are eating his Body and drinking his Blood. At Mass we will sing "Glory be to God on High"...not heard since the Last Sunday of Epiphany. And Jesus tells us we must do as he does...we must love each other.

At the conclusion of the Maundy Thursday Mass we will carry the remaining consecrated bread to a special Altar...our own Garden of Gethsemane. We are there with Jesus as he asks God to let this ordeal pass him by...but Jesus resigns himself to what he must do...there simply is no other way to make things right again. The lights are turned off and we leave the church in darkness.

It's now Good Friday and we are the crowd shouting at Jesus happy to see him die...or perhaps we are his disciples watching from a distance. We don't like what we see but we decide to move closer...Jesus looks at us and says...Mary is your mother...and he looks at Mary and says...they are your children.

On Good Friday we receive Communion in one kind only...Jesus will have no more blood to shed. His work is finished! His Passiontide of endurance and suffering will be over. He will have offered himself for us as the "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world."

Our own Passiontide leads us to the same Jesus who made the outrageous claim to be...I AM...GOD...to the people 2000 years ago. They had a decision to make...so do we. Either Jesus is the real article who has put things right again between God and humankind...or he was the greatest scam artist who ever lived.

Jesus is not hiding from those who know and love him and love each other as he said we must. We know everything he did was for us...and we can set all doubts aside and say..."My Lord and My God."

