

Palm Sunday and Holy Week

Scribbling Graffiti seems to be as old as the human race. Archeologists found in the ruins of ancient Rome a crude drawing of a man hanging on a cross, but with the head of a donkey. Under the drawing was scrawled, Gallius worships a Jackass.

The Roman soldiers mocked Jesus as a fool. They bowed and bent their knee before the scourged condemned prisoner saying, Hail, King of the Jews, as they spit on him and struck him. St. Paul tells us that the foolishness of God is wiser than men. Christ crucified is a scandal and a fool in the eyes of the world. However, to believers He is the Wisdom of God.

The Gospel message and the mystery of the Cross, call each generation to take a stand: to reject worldly wisdom and to follow Christ, willing to be fools of God. Our father, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, describes himself in some of his letters as a Court Jester, a clown. The theme of a Fool for Christ runs all through the Christian centuries, from the desert fathers (and Mothers), to Bernard and Francis of Assisi, to Philip Neri of Rome, and Ignatius of Loyola, to Maximilian Kolbe.

Worldly wisdom today tells us to do what works; truth and falsehood, good and evil, are all relative. It just depends on circumstances—whatever gets results.

Pope Benedict calls this the Tyranny of Relativism. A glaring example of false worldly wisdom is American Catholic politicians who compromise or deny the moral teaching of the Church in order to be elected, to get popular approval.

Palm Sunday and Holy Week show us how fickle and shallow worldly success and popularity truly are. One day a crowd cries, Hosanna! The next day a crowd cries, Crucify him! Christ's Paschal Mystery of Passion and Death, Resurrection and Gift of the Holy Spirit, which is celebrated in our liturgy, should deepen our faith in the truth of our Redeemer's saving love for each person, and should strengthen us to choose the foolishness of Christ in everyday life, when the world tells us, You are worshipping a Jackass.

The Fools Prayer
By Edward Sill

The royal feast was done; the King These clumsy feet, still in the mire,

Sought some new sport to banish care, Go crushing blossoms without end;
And to his jester cried: Sir Fool, These hard, well-meaning hands we thrust
Kneel now, and make for us a prayer! Among the heart-strings of a friend.

The jester doffed his cap and bells, The ill-timed truth we might have kept--
And stood the mocking court before; Who knows how sharp it pierced and stung?
They could not see the bitter smile The word we had not sense to say--
Behind the painted grin he wore. Who knows how grandly it had rung?

He bowed his head, and bent his knee Our faults no tenderness should ask,
Upon the monarch's silken stool, The chastening stripes must cleanse them all;
His pleading voice arose: O Lord, But for our blunders—oh, in shame
Be merciful to me, a fool! Before the eyes of heaven we fall.

No pity, Lord, could change the heart Earth bears no balsam for mistakes;
From red with wrong to white as wool; Men crown the knave, and scourge the tool
The rod must heal the sin: but, Lord, That did his will; but Thou, O Lord,
Be merciful to me, a fool! Be merciful to me, a fool!

'Tis not by guilt the onward sweep The room was hushed; in silence rose
Of truth and right, O Lord we stay; The King, and sought his gardens cool,
'Tis by our follies that so long And walked apart, and murmured low,
We hold the earth from heaven away. Be merciful to me, a fool!

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