

Reflection for Palm Sunday of the Passion Year A 2020
Clashing of Wills

“Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Mt 21:5).

Matthew quotes from the prophecy of Zechariah to make sure we understand what kind of king Jesus is.

Zachariah’s prophecy goes on to describe this king as one commanding peace to the nations.

There will be no more chariots, war-horses, or battle bows. (Zech 9:10)

He is the king of peace
and he stands in sharp contrast
to the pride, arrogance, power,
oppression, vainglory, and violence
of the empire that rules the world.

That was true then and it’s true today.

Two different visions for life and the world were entering Jerusalem – the Kingdom of Heaven and the kingdom of Caesar.

That is the central conflict of Holy Week.

We will see it played out in the gospel texts
we will hear on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

I can’t help but wonder,
how far have we come since that first Holy Week?
Is it any different in today’s world?
Is it any different in your life and mine?
The will to power or the will to life; that’s the question.
That’s what we wrestle with today and throughout this Holy Week.
Jesus wrestles with the will to power and the will to life.
And so do we.

We have all experienced the will to power in our lives.

The will to power can show up anywhere:
in our families, our marriage, our church,
our school, our workplace, our country.

The will to power is as old as Cain and Abel.

It’s a part of the human condition,
and it’s infected and affected you and me.

The will to power leads to live closed, afraid, and defensive.
It must always be strong and on guard.
When we will to power,
the world gets divided between us and them,
friend and foe, good and bad.
We calculate, quantify, rationalize, and justify.
There's an edge and a hardness to life and relationships.
Others become means to an end.
Motives and feelings are either disguised or ignored.
We try to become overly self-sufficient.
We need to be right, to prove ourselves, and to have the final word.
We become the center of our world.

But what about the will to life?
Where and when have you seen that arise?
What effect did it have?
How did it feel?
Whose faces do you see when you think of the will to life?
How has their will to life changed your life?
The will to life is as old and sacred
as that first breath God breathed into the nostrils of Adam.

When we will to life the world seems larger and more beautiful.
We are open, vulnerable, and receptive.
Our relationships are characterized by intimacy and gratitude.
We are inspired and we breathe just a bit more deeply.
Our minds are open and we are willing to learn and change.
Our hearts are open and we are more willing
to love, forgive, and risk being broken.
The will to life lets us see the fragility of people and relationships.
It invites self-giving, self-sacrifice, self-surrender.

Concern for justice, compassion, and human dignity
come to the forefront.
God feels closer, more tangible, and found in the ordinary.
We are wholehearted, enthusiastic, energetic.
We no longer need to be in control.
Life is not just about ourselves.
Instead, we am about life.

Two processions entered Jerusalem,
and the whole city was in turmoil.
The turmoil of Palm Sunday is not, however, limited to Jerusalem.
The will to power and the will to life process
throughout our world, our nation, our lives.
Wherever they clash you will find turmoil.
Maybe we need that turmoil.
It shakes and awakens us.
It reminds us that there are two processions
running through our life,
a confrontation is taking place,
and there's a choice to made.

Which procession are we in?
Which one do we choose?

We began Lent with a litany proclaiming that no matter
where Jesus went, we would "follow the Savior."
We have followed the Savior through this time of turmoil—
A time when we are very much faced with the life and death consequences of the
conflict between the will to power
and the will to life.
If we choose the will to life,
then we will certainly still be following our Savior . . .
into Jerusalem, the Last Supper, the agony in the Garden,
his arrest, his trial, his scouring and his crucifixion
and his burial.
But the will to life doesn't end at the tomb . . . that is only the beginning.