

Dear Lectors,

The following is a reflection by Ross Beaudoin, from Celebration Publications, for Palm Sunday.

Palm Sunday

In the early 1940s, a Catholic laywoman, Caryll Houselander, published a book titled *This War is the Passion*. The author was referring to the Second World War, which was consuming much of the globe at that time.

“This War is the Passion.” What, exactly, did Houselander mean by that? World War II was 20 centuries removed from the passion of Jesus Christ. As we heard in today’s Gospel, Jesus’ passion was a long series of painful events. We read of Jesus’ betrayal by his friend Judas; his agony in the garden; his arrest and imprisonment; his betrayal by Peter; the flight of all but one of his apostles; his trial, the mocking and scourging; his rejection by the people followed by his condemnation to death; his carrying of the cross — his own death instrument; and, finally, his execution and death.

Yet, Houselander writes this book with this extraordinarily provocative title in 1941. What does she mean? I think the answer lies in understanding a spiritual experience that the author had in her mid-20s. One day as she was traveling in the London subway, she became aware of the presence of Christ in every person around her. That experience convinced her that Christ was to be found in everyone.

Let us consider Houselander’s insight in light of the theology of the Incarnation and the mystical body of Christ. If we understand her correctly, what she is saying is that Christ identifies with each person, and conversely, each person is identified with Christ.

Today’s second reading from Paul to the Philippians clearly states that Christ became one of us. Christ “emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness.” We also know that in baptism, each person “puts on Christ.”

So, for Houselander’s “this war,” whatever that is in our lives, is the passion of Jesus Christ in us — right now. For Jesus, the passion was that totality of physical and interior suffering he endured in his life on this earth, especially in his last days. For Jesus, the passion is that set of physical and interior sufferings that we ourselves undergo.

This “war” for some might literally be the state of war experienced in Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Central America or on the streets of our cities. For others, this war might be the war between workers and employers, the war between parents and children or between spouses. This war can be the conflict between citizens and government for the rights that belong to the people. This war can point to the struggle within ourselves —

trying to get control of our own lives.

The wars that we find ourselves in are the passion — they are our passion; they are Christ’s passion in us.

Jesus’ passion was excruciating, but it ended not in death but life. While he was enduring his passion, it was struggle, rejection, pain and death. But because Jesus endured to the end, he was transformed into glory in the resurrection. As members of the body of Christ, our passion will also end in glory with Christ.

Caryll Houselander had moments of enlightenment: She saw through the difficulties, pain and confusion of the present to the eternal reality of the unity of humanity and divinity. We may also have opportunities of enlightenment, of seeing through our passion, if we open ourselves to God in Christ living in us.

This War is the Passion. This Holy Week is the passion of Jesus Christ. This week, we include our own passion, too, in Christ. Next week, we share in the glory of Christ’s resurrection.

Some Information:

- Attached is the Lector Schedule from February 17, 2018 through June 3, 2018. This schedule takes us from Lent, through Easter, Holy Week Pentecost to the Feast of Corpus Christi. You can find this schedule on our Website at www.steseton.com.
- In March, there will be a sign-up sheet for the Holy Week liturgies.
- We are proclaiming the “B” Cycle readings— Mark’s Gospel. The Gospel Reading for the 3rd, 4th and 5th Sundays of Lent and Palm Sunday will be read in parts. On the enclosed schedule, lectors are assigned for these Sundays in Lent. If you are unable to participate, please email me or call me at 403-0101 x102.
- Fr. Ken Simpson will lead our Lenten Mission. The Mission will take place on Monday, February 26th, Tuesday, February 27th and Wednesday, February 28th.
- Our Parish Lenten Reconciliation is Sunday, March 18 at 7pm, the Fifth Sunday of Lent.
- Please mark your calendars, the Easter Vigil celebrated on March 31st will begin at 7:30pm. Easter Sunday is April 1st.

There is a beauty as well as a wildness to Lent’s path. God tells Israel in Isaiah, “I lay your pavements in carnelian, your foundations in sapphires” (54:11). The readings marking our way along the days of the Lenten season are indeed like gemstones. Build your Lent around them, lay your life on their foundations, and together let us follow them on toward Easter. *Michelle Francl-Donnay from Not by Bread alone.*

Wishing you stillness and Peace.
Claudia Nolan