

**Ran Away Naked
Palm Sunday (B)
(Mk 14-15)**

In each of the four Gospels, the largest section is devoted to Holy Week. All the details of the Passion have been remembered and recounted, since the beginning of the Church's proclamation, and recorded in the Gospels. 2000 years later we continue to remember and recount them, because in them is accomplished the fulfillment of Scripture and our salvation.

These details include: the palms, donkey, alabaster jar, pieces of silver, bread and wine, kiss, blindfold, rooster, scourging, crowning, cross, nails, lots, sponge, spear, tomb, shroud... and many others.

But it is not just the instruments of the passion that stand out, it is the people. What is amazing as we listen to the Passion account is in the number of individuals who played important and essential roles, whose lives were intersected by the Passion of Christ and permanently changed. It was these very people who first recounted and proclaimed the details in the early church to all who would listen, and whose accounts eventually made it into the Gospels.

Simon the Leper and his household in Bethany – Mary, Martha, and Lazarus; the people who provided the donkey; the man carrying the water jar; the apostles; Simon of Cyrene and his sons Rufus and Alexander; the centurion; Joseph of Arimathea; his mother Mary and the numerous holy women; Mary Magdalene, Mary mother of James and Joses, Salome... We also recall some people remembered in the early church who were not recorded in any of the four Gospels, such as the woman who offered her veil to wipe Jesus' face in the Way of the Cross. All of these and many other individuals were privileged to fulfill a role ordained by the Father, and share in the Passion of Christ. All of these individuals' lives were defined and forever changed by the role they fulfilled.

And then there are the "bad guys." Judas, of whom Jesus said it would have been better for him never to have been born; the high priest Caiaphas and members of his Sanhedrin; the false witnesses and guards who spat in his face; Pontius Pilate who three times declared Jesus innocent yet still had him brutally scourged and executed; Barabbas who should have been crucified instead of Jesus; thieves crucified with him, one saved and one not; the fickle crowd which called for his crucifixion; the brutal soldiers who took delight in his torture; the passersby who mocked or ignored his plight...

St. Mark (alone) tells of another individual: the young man in a loin cloth, who after the arrest followed Jesus to house of Caiaphas, but ran away naked when the guards tried to grab him (Mk 14:51-52). This unusual incident is likely

referring to Mark himself, whose family provided the upper room, and whose home became the first parish church in Jerusalem following the Resurrection. He must have been awoken suddenly by the commotion of the arrest, without time to put his robe on.

It is a striking incident, that illustrates how the Passion catches us off guard and exposes us for who we are. Before the Cross of Christ we are naked, we cannot hide. And we are revealed as being either with him or against him; on the side of good, or evil.

Many who were criticized and looked down upon (Mary of Bethany with her alabaster jar of costly nard), some who were weak and even denied him (Peter of the cockcrow), were revealed by the Passion to be among the good. Others who were held in high veneration and respect (the high priest and elders), or even from among his trusted intimate friends (Judas), were revealed by the Passion to be devils. Many who on Palm Sunday hailed Jesus as Messiah with shouts of “Hosanna,” one week later were among those shouting, “Crucify him.”

The young man in the garden ran away naked into the night. Like Adam and Eve at the tree realizing they were naked (Gn 3:7-8), the Passion of Christ exposes our shame. Before the Cross we are confronted with our sin, our weakness, our fallen human condition. The Cross is indeed the Tree of knowledge of good and evil.

The Gospel of the Passion doesn't just recount in detail what happened 2000 years ago. It helps us understand that our lives too, intersect the Passion of Christ today, and we too play a role, for better or worse, in the story of salvation. During this Holy Week, let us therefore recognize our lives – not as we want to be or think we are – but as the Passion reveals the vulnerable reality and truth. We wear nothing but a loin cloth, and even that is useless.