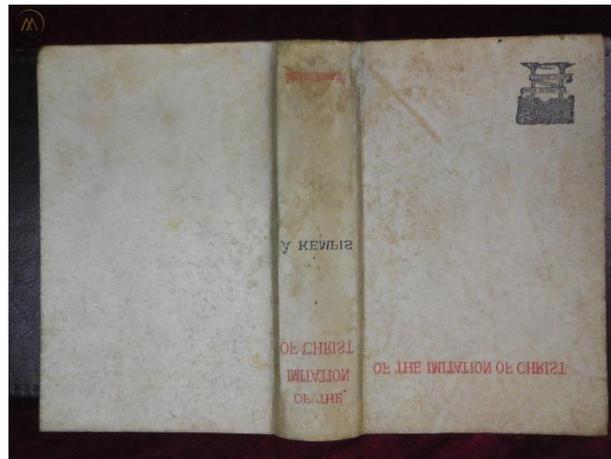




SUNDAY OF THE PALMS Sunday, April 5th, 2020

Imitating Whom and What?



The idea of following Jesus is not a new one – it has been around for a few thousand years and has been interpreted in many ways: some more adequate than others. The worn hard cover above, is of a publication published a long time back – somewhere between 1418 and 1427, written in all probability by one Thomas à Kempis, called *The Imitation of Christ (De Imitatione Christi)*. It was the fruit of the *Devotio Moderna* movement, which sought to reform the corrupted clergy. It focused in large part upon the interior life and withdrawal from the world, typical of the medieval period. That said, the idea of following or imitating Jesus cannot be restricted to Thomas. Indeed, others, such as Francis of Assisi, also subscribed to the imitation of Jesus, but more broadly, arguing that it must include an inward life that does not end there, but which shapes the outward one; one that lives in clear solidarity with the poor in human history

As we begin Holy Week this Sunday, April 5th, Sunday of the Palms, we read Matthew's account of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, that draws a similar conclusion to our past few readings of John's Gospel (the stories of Nicodemus the Woman at the Well, the Blind Man, and the Raising of Lazarus), but in a different way. In John we heard that God is a God of Life – meaning life that *knows no death* rather than just life *after* death – while in Matthew, we see this life expressed in a more overt political manner: Jesus as the one who confronts the death-dealing social economic and political systems of Palestine, personified in Caesar, Caesar's chief ally, the Temple, and the volatile crowds, who sometimes 'get him' but most of the time don't.

The question that Palm Sunday puts to us is, who do we imitate, what world-view do we follow? Are we committed to building cultures and societies which yield life that know no death?

GATHERING

(Let us imagine, visualize, the Cross standing on the right side of the altar, and the palms lay around it)

Nothing Can Trouble 820
Nada te turbe

Noth-ing can trou - ble; noth-ing can fright - en. Those who seek
Na - da te tur - be, na - da te es - pan - te. Quien a Dios

God shall nev - er go want - ing, God a - lone fills us.
tie - ne na - da le fal - ta. So - lo Dios bas - ta.

This meditative refrain from Taizé is based on a saying attributed to Teresa of Avila: "Let nothing trouble you; let nothing frighten you. All things are passing; God never changes. Patience obtains all things. Whoever possesses God lacks nothing; God alone suffices."

TEXT: Attr. Teresa of Avila, 16th cent.; para. Taizé Community: Spanish, 1986; English, 1995
MUSIC: Jacques Berthier, 1986
Text and Music © 1991 Les Presses de Taizé (admin. GIA Publications, Inc.)

NADA TE TURBE
Irregular

You may watch and listen to this on the URL on You Tube below

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=go1-BoDD7Cl>

We light the Paschal Candle

Welcome

In the name of the Father

In the name of the Son

In the name of the Holy Spirit

The Lord be with

And also with you

Let's Sing: I danced in the morning (TIS 242, Lord of the Dance, Sydney Carter)

A Prayer for We Who are on the Journey: Courage to Imitate

We respond in saying Augustine's words from "Confessions"
"O God, Our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you",
and then singing the Taize melody, *"Jesus remember me",* TIS 730)

O God,
Our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you.

You are beyond our busy imaginings,
far above our elevated constructions of thought.

Yet you meet us in the dust.
Your footprints cross ours.
Behind us and before us, you tread the path,
you lead the way,
you exult,
you bow low,
you lift us up.

You look upon us through the face of the poor;
you bless us in the nurture of friendship;
you challenge us in the cries for justice
and the weeping for hope.

***O God,
Our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you***

***Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.
Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom (TIS 730)***

Yoked to Jesus your Son,
we strain against your direction,
summoned to follow your way,
we burden ourselves and others;
asked to stand up,
we retreat in our own inadequacy.

Forgive us the wrongs we have done
to others, to ourselves, to you.

***O God,
Our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you***

***Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.
Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom (TIS 730)***

Forgive us our bondage to fixed patterns
when they no longer serve you;
our surrender to newness when newness is folly;
our failure to listen to the old people of this land
and the old and new who are hurting
and hidden beyond our preoccupations.

Lift us from our fear that we may see your vision
know your wisdom
and find our rest in you,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

***O God,
Our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you***

***Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.
Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom (TIS 730)***

Thanks to Bill Loader

Lent Event

I have repeated the message from last Sunday, today, because of its relevance to the idea of building life, constructing cultures of life as the people of Ambon are doing: Muslims and Christians together.

<https://fundraise.unitingworld.org.au/event/lent-event/be-inspired>

LET'S HEAR THE WORD

Some Observations about the Behaviour of Imitating

The human is indissolubly linked with imitation: a human being only becomes human at all by imitating other human beings.

Theodor Adorno

Our historical experience teaches us that men imitate one another, that their attitudes are statistically calculable, their opinions manipulable, and that man is therefore less an individual (a subject) than an element in a mass.”

Milan Kundera, Encounter

The imitation of Christ does not mean to live a life like Christ, but to live your life as authentically as Christ lived his, then there are many ways and forms in which a man can be a Christian.”

Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*

What Jesus invites us to imitate is his own desire, the spirit that directs him toward the goal on which his intention is fixed: to resemble God the Father as much as possible.”

René Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*



For Palm Sunday, the lectionary only includes the Psalm and the Gospel readings, but I have added the Epistle reading for Passion Sunday, which is also celebrated on Palm Sunday, but with variant readings

Psalm 118: 1-2, 19-29

This psalm, chosen for the celebration of Palm Sunday each year, is appropriately a psalm of thanksgiving and celebration, befitting Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. It had strong connections with the Easter season in the early church and it was used in early Christian theology. It is also the psalm set for Easter Day each year.

The verses set for today come from the beginning of the psalm and from its end. In the latter, the psalmist celebrates the victory that God has won. The threat to Israel behind this victory is set out in vv. 10–13, in which the psalmist portrays a situation of being surrounded by hostile nations, and of being pushed hard, facing defeat. The Lord, the psalmist proclaims, has come to the rescue.

¹O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; ***his steadfast love endures forever!***

²Let Israel say, ***“His steadfast love endures forever.”***

¹⁹Open to me the gates of righteousness, ***that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD.***

²⁰This is the gate of the LORD; ***the righteous shall enter through it.***

²¹I thank you that you have answered me, ***and have become my salvation.***

²²The stone that the builders rejected, ***has become the chief cornerstone.***

²³This is the Lord’s doing; ***it is marvellous in our eyes.***

²⁴This is the day that the LORD has made; ***let us rejoice and be glad in it.***

²⁵Save us, we beseech you, O LORD! ***O LORD, we beseech you, give us success!***

²⁶Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD. ***We bless you from the house of the LORD.***

²⁷The LORD is God, and he has given us light. ***Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.***

²⁸You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; ***you are my God, I will extol you.***

²⁹O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, ***for his steadfast love endures forever.***

Philippians 2:5-11 (J.B. Phillips, New Testament Translation)

This passage which actually includes begins with v.1 and ends with v.11, would have stood on its own before Paul placed it in this particular context in his writing to the Church in Philippi. Perhaps it is enough to say begin and end this comment with v.5. On the one hand it seems fairly simple, but it runs much deeper than first appearances. It could simply mean: 'be like Jesus!' But it is saying more. It is saying: let the mindset of Christ be yours as you draw your life from him or live 'in him'. Certainly, elsewhere Paul usually goes one step further than holding Christ (or himself) up as an example to be followed. He usually includes the notion that there is an inner dynamic which helps make this possible. This is most evident in the verses which follow this passage, where we read: 'work out your own salvation, because it is God who is at work in you' (2:12-13).

5-11 Let Christ himself be your example as to what your attitude should be. For he, who had always been God by nature, did not cling to his prerogatives as God's equal, but stripped himself of all privilege by consenting to be a slave by nature and being born as mortal man. And, having become man, he humbled himself by living a life of utter obedience, even to the extent of dying, and the death he died was the death of a common criminal. That is why God has now lifted him so high, and has given him the name beyond all names, so that at the name of Jesus "every knee shall bow", whether in Heaven or earth or under the earth. And that is why, in the end, "every tongue shall confess" that Jesus Christ" is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Matthew 21:1-11 (J.B. Phillips)

Palm Sunday is also Passion Sunday, driving us toward Jesus' Passion. It has its genesis in Jesus' strategy to confront the religious and political powers of the day. His actions belong to the body language of the kingdom. It is an expression of hope for change. To journey with Jesus, still means challenging the powers which hold sway in our modern world and even in the modern church.

21 ¹⁻³ As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples ahead telling them, "Go into the village in front of you and you will at once find there an ass tethered, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. Should anyone say anything to you, you are to say, 'The Lord needs them', and he will send them immediately."

4-5 All this happened to fulfil the prophet's saying—'Tell the daughter of Zion, Behold your king is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey'.

6-9 So the disciples went off and followed Jesus' instructions. They brought the ass and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and Jesus took his seat. Then most of the crowd spread their own cloaks on the road, while others cut down branches from the trees and spread them in his path. The crowds who went in front of him and the crowds who followed him all shouted, "God save the Son of David! 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' God save him from on high!"

10-11 And as he entered Jerusalem a shock ran through the whole city. "Who is this?" men cried. "This is Jesus the prophet," replied the crowd, "the man from Nazareth in Galilee!"

The Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you Lord Christ

Film clip from Call the Midwife (Series 4, Episode 3, 52:59 – 59:55)

The community is outraged and opinions divided at Nonnatus House when an expectant father, Tony, is charged with gross indecency - homosexuality, (at the time illegal in the United Kingdom). He is ordered to undergo hormone treatment, and the couple are despised and shunned by neighbours. We pick up the story as Maree, talks with Tony about his role as a father, as he tearfully struggles with his bi-sexuality. For her part, Maree is also rejected, by the community, excluded from her role in Poplar's annual Rose Queen, ceremony, a beauty pageant which she had won the year prior. In this scene, Tony confronts the community and wins a place for Maree in the event. In between these scenes, we find another; a poor Irish immigrant family, overcoming the discrimination against them, as they win a council flat; and the discussion about rat infestation, where it takes little imagination to work out the correlation between 'rats', Irish immigrants and homosexuals.

Some thoughts about who and what we imitate

Let's Give

Doxology

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
praise him, all creatures here below,
praise him above, ye heavenly host,***

praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Prayer of Dedication

Sacrament of the Eucharist

Hymn: Song: From heaven you came (TIS 256, Graham Kendrick, Servant King)

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you

And also with you

Lift up your hearts

We lift them to the Lord

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God

It is right to give our thanks and praise

With all we are, we give you glory,
Trinity of love, the one and Holy God,
Sovereign of all time and space.

We celebrate this wide, red land,
for its rugged beauty,
its changing seasons,
for its diverse peoples,
and for all that lives upon this fragile earth.

You have called us to be Church in this place,
to give voice to every creature under heaven.
We rejoice with all that you have made,
as we join the company of heaven in their song

(We sing)

***Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.***

***Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna
in the highest***

To Adam and Eve, you gave the world and its wonders,
But we misused your gift of freedom.
We bless you for your mercy,
For you never cease to call our restless hearts until they find
rest in you.
Again and again you raise up men and women to speak your
word, to guide, to challenge and to convert.

At the last Father,
You sent Jesus Christ,
Child of your love, God with us.
Born as one of us,
He lived our life and died our death,
Offering us both now and forever,
Eternal life with you.

Through him, in him and because of him,
We affirm the Church's faith

***Christ has died.
Christ has risen.
Christ will come again.***

Institution

Lord's Prayer

Let us say the Lord's Prayer

***Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.***

***Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.***

***For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.***

Deliver us Lord from every evil,
and grant us peace in our day.
In your mercy, keep us free from sin
and protect us from all anxiety
as we wait in joyful hope
for the coming of our Saviour.

Breaking of the Bread

Christ is the bread of joy
Who shares food with sinners.

Christ is the cup of life,
Who revives the faint-hearted

Let us receive what we are;
Let us become what we receive.

Lamb of God

Jesus, Wisdom of God,
have mercy on us

Jesus, Word made flesh,
have mercy on us

Jesus, Liberator of creation
grant us peace.

Communion

Distribution.

Prayer after Communion

God of heaven and earth,
you make us one in Christ.
Inspire us with new vision
and the wisdom of ancient dreams.
Give us strength to walk together
In Christ's name
Amen

Prayers of the People

Today let us offer prayers for the people in various states who still work to recover from the disasters of November, December and January. Also let us offer prayers for the world as we struggle to emerge from the Covid19.

God our Healer, show your compassion for the whole human family that is in turmoil and burdened with illness and with fear.

Hear our cry, O God, Listen to our prayer.

Come to our aid as the coronavirus spreads globally, heal those who are sick, support and protect their families and friends from being infected.

Hear our cry, O God, Listen to our prayer.

Grant us your spirit of love and self-discipline so that we may come together, working to control and eliminate the coronavirus.

Hear our cry, O God, Listen to our prayer.

Make us vigilant, attentive, and proactive in the eradication of all diseases, malaria, dengue, HIV & AIDS, and others [may be named out-loud or in silence] that create suffering and often result in death for many people.

Hear our cry, O God, Listen to our prayer.

Heal our self-centeredness and indifference that makes us worry only when the virus threatens us, open ways beyond timidity and fear that too easily ignore our neighbour.

Hear our cry, O God, Listen to our prayer.

Strengthen and encourage those in public health services and in the medical profession: care-givers, nurses, attendants, doctors, all who commit themselves to caring for the sick and their families.

Hear our cry, O God, Listen to our prayer.

Inspire, give insight and hope to all researchers focused on developing a vaccine.

Hear our cry, O God, Listen to our prayer.

Sustain all workers and business owners who suffer loss of livelihood due to shut-downs, quarantines, closed borders, and other restrictions... protect and guard all those who must travel.

Hear our cry, O God, Listen to our prayer.

Guide the leaders of the nations that they speak the truth, halt the spread of misinformation and act with justice so that all your family may know healing.

Hear our cry, O God, Listen to our prayer.

Heal our world, heal our bodies, strengthen our hearts and our minds, and in the midst of turmoil, give us hope and peace.

Hear our cry, O God, Listen to our prayer.

Hold in your gentle embrace all who have died and who will die this day. Comfort their loved ones in their despair.

Hear our cry, O God, Listen to our prayer

Remember all your family, the entire human race, and all your creation, in your love.

Amen!

Hymn: Ride on, ride on (TiS 348, Winchester, H.H. Milman)

Blessing

May we live,
tenaciously *bending toward life*,
confronting our brokenness.
May we discern the spirits
May we read the signs of the times
And channel our desire for *Christ's* purposes

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ

Closing Postlude

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=go1-BoDD7Cl>

