

Which Procession Are We In?

My sisters and brothers, two processions entered Jerusalem that day. One from the west: Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea and Samaria entered Jerusalem at the head of a column of Imperial Cavalry and soldiers, proclaiming the power of Empire.

Imagine that procession of power: cavalry on horses, foot-soldiers in leather armor, chariots, weapons, flags and banners, gold eagles mounted on poles, sunlight glinting on metal and gold....

Rhythmic sounds of marching feet, the creaking of leather, the beating of drums, clinking of bridles, the swirling of dust, and: ...the eyes of silent onlookers – some curious, some in awe, ... some resentful.

Pilate's military procession – demonstrating Imperial domination – arriving in Jerusalem not out of empathetic respect for the religious devotion at the Passover Festival; but as a sign of might, in case there was trouble at the Festival that celebrated the Jewish People's liberation from an earlier empire. This procession today symbolizes our need to be on top, successful, powerful, popular, wealthy ...serving our ego.

Coming from the east on that spring day, was the second procession: a peasant procession led by Jesus on a donkey. Jesus, from the peasant village of Nazareth, cheered by a motley crew of followers: the poor, the sick, the lame, the lepers. No doubt the woman once caught in adultery was there and the healed blind man; the reborn woman Jesus met at the well, and: Lazarus – raised from the dead – and Martha and Mary.... A group of poorly dressed fisherman trying to put some order in the procession; and, of course, Mary – Jesus' mother – perhaps smiling on the outside, but full of fear of what was to happen next....

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Pilate's procession proclaiming the power of Empire...;  
Jesus' procession proclaiming the Reign of God!

Pilate's procession proclaiming power, glory and violence...;  
Jesus' procession proclaiming the Kingdom of justice, peace and nonviolence; compassion and inclusion and forgiveness: a Kingdom of love!

Pilate's procession proclaiming the Status Quo...;  
Jesus' procession proclaiming the dream of God: the radically different, coming – and already present – Reign of God *on earth as in heaven!*

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What does this liturgical bent of Palm Sunday say to us as disciples here at All Saints Parish in 2014 today? Is it Jesus, his mission and countercultural values, that guide and challenge our lives? As we come to the end of our Lenten retreat - our "spring cleaning of our hearts," what might we need to let go of...? What may be blocking our way as we enter Holy Week? This is the question of Palm Sunday; this is the number one question of the week we call Holy that is about to unfold:

My brothers and sisters, Which procession do we belong to? Which procession are we in?

As we seek to accompany Jesus on his journey to Calvary what might we need to do differently? How can we remain in solidarity with all those on the road to Calvary in our world today...?

Perhaps Pope Francis is pointing the way for the Church in 2014:

“Oh, how I pray for church of the poor and for the poor.”

- dreaming of a church of service rather than domination,
- dreaming of a church of forgiveness rather than judgments,
- dreaming of a church of simplicity rather than luxury,
- dreaming of a church of joy rather than “sour-pusses,”
- dreaming of the church as a field hospital for the hurting, rather than a small chapel for respected.

My sisters and brothers, which procession do we belong to...? Which procession are we in? Only in answering this question, brothers and sisters, can we go forth as disciples, as Church, as wounded healers, with *the joy of the Gospel*, on a mission to transform the world; to call humanity out from its tombs, unbind everyone – so that all people might live in the freedom of light and peace.

I’d like to conclude my reflection with few words from a book written by Father John Dear, who is the most prominent witness for global peace in the Catholic Church in our country today. In his book Living Peace: A Spirituality of Contemplation and Action, he says:

“Pursuing peace at every level of life – beginning with our own hearts and souls and reaching out toward every human being alive on the planet, is the greatest and most fulfilling challenge one can undertake in one’s life.

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“As we make peace with ourselves and welcome the God of peace who lives within us, we will learn to make peace with those around us and with others throughout the world.

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“Over time, we become true instruments of God’s own peace and help make the world a better and more just place for all.

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“The challenge is to do both: to pursue peace within and to pursue peace with the whole human race. Let us now take a step towards that peace.”

Amen!