

+ PALM SUNDAY

April 9, 2018

Homily of the Right Reverend Dom Philip Anderson,
Abbot of Clear Creek Abbey.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
My very dear sons,

Just awhile ago we were processing with palms in our hands, singing the liturgical *Hosanna pium* that re-echoes each year those ecstatic praises sung by the children long ago, when the Messiah Himself, the Savior of the world, road upon a humble donkey along the road into Jerusalem. What could be more fitting, more beautiful? But just now we have listened to a far different chant, a song of sorts, but not a joyful song. We heard with no small sorrow the inspired words of Saint Matthew relating the Passion of the Lord. Now it is no longer the *Hosanna* that rings in our ears, but the dreadful cries of *Crucifigatur, Let Him be crucified!*¹

To be sure, the Passion is the saddest of canticles. It expresses the final fruit of the disobedience of our first parents and the result of all the sins, the painful mistakes, of the history of humanity. It is a lament on falling apart of things. After the painful last breath of the God-Man there follows the tearing of the veil in the Temple, the upheaval of the earth, the rending of stones, the breaking open of tombs—all of this in darkness. What is left if not the end of the world? All is consummated, finished, as we will hear it said in another, different, narrative of the Passion.²

All is finished, and yet not altogether. During this Holy Week we will have ample occasion to contemplate at length the meaning of this work of destruction and to look for some light amid the encompassing shadows. Jesus called Himself the “light of the world.”³ Could such a lamp as that be entirely extinguished? Then again, as the psalmist asks, “In the grave, among the dead (in Sheol, in Hell) who will give Thee thanks?”⁴ Can there ever be a song of praise or of thanksgiving – of life – again after the tragedy of Calvary?

When all is said and done, however, as with the Apostles and the Holy Women, who have given up everything to follow the Jesus, what else we can do but follow still the Lord through these terrible hours and continue to hope? If no one else manages to keep alive this flame of Divine hope, at least the Blessed Virgin Mother of God continues to stand in that faint but precious light. We will do likewise and continue “against hope to believe in hope,” as it is said of Abraham.⁵ Amen.

¹ Mt. 27:22.

² Cf. Jn. 19:30.

³ Jn. 8:12.

⁴ Psalm 6:5.

⁵ Rom. 4:18.