

In the Garden
April 10, 2022, Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord
Gospel of Luke 22:14-23, 56
Fr. John

Today, Palm [Passion] Sunday marks the beginning of the week we call HOLY. The biblical stories relating to Christ's death and resurrection in the liturgies will be familiar to most of us. However, though the scripture stories do not change, the way we may approach them changes because of our ever-evolving and changing experience of life. Perhaps there is a part of the passion story that speaks to us in a new way because of that.

When we listen to the story of the passion, we may be caught up in all the activity that was swirling around Jesus. 'Action' is what sells. Hollywood makes billions of dollars putting out 'ACTION MOVIES'. I don't think that would be the case if they put out a movie trailer about meditative prayer. That certainly wouldn't get many to the box office.

So while we may be taken up with the dramatic action aspect of the passion - Jesus' arrest, the scourging, the trial, and the crucifixion, we may not pay the same attention to the non-action part of the narrative namely the prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

What indeed was happening in the mind of Jesus in those quiet and solitary moments? And it begs the question of what goes through **our** minds when and if we try to spend some time in silent prayer.

Step 11 in the 12 step program of recovery states: that we 'sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand God, praying only for the knowledge of God's will for us and power to carry it out .' That sounds a lot like the prayer of Jesus in the garden.

Notice how it speaks of prayer and meditation and **not** prayers and recitation. It says to me that the internal action must take place before any external action is carried out. In this case Jesus needed the quiet and solitary time to discern the will of the Father and in turn we need to discern the mind of Christ before we act.

Spending time in silence, whether it's before the Blessed Sacrament in a church or in our favourite chair at home is vital in developing a contemplative mind. Contemplation, as one spiritual director once described it, is thinking without thinking. It's a way of emptying the mind and filling the heart.

Jesus, the gospel tells us, withdrew from the apostles to pray alone. In the midst of all the intrigue and plots swirling around him, he sought quiet and solitude to open himself up to the will of the Father.

So this week is a busy one, filled with all the drama and activity of the liturgies commemorating Christ's death and resurrection. But all this may be for naught if we neglect to make time for some moments of quiet reflection and contemplation allowing God to speak to us in the deepest recesses of our hearts - like Jesus in the Garden.

Perhaps to lead you to that space of solitude you might locate that line from Psalm 46 which reads:

Be still and know that I am God

Be still and know that I am...

Be still and know...

Be still...

Be...