

03.29 CCV - Palm Sunday

Dear Friends,

There are many ways to preach the Passion. It is so full, so dense, so overwhelming, that one could spend a lifetime circling around it. But today, I want to draw your attention to one simple, almost easily overlooked detail:

Jesus does not defend himself.

As we heard in the Passion according to Matthew, accusation after accusation is thrown at him—false witnesses, political charges, mockery, violence. And yet, again and again, we are told:

“But Jesus remained silent.”

This silence is not weakness. It is not resignation. It is not defeat.

It is, in fact, the very form that divine love takes in a fallen world.

St Paul, in the letter to the Philippians, gives us the key:

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus... who emptied himself... and became obedient unto death—even death on a cross.”

The Greek word Paul uses—kenosis, self-emptying—describes not just something Christ does, but something Christ is.

And in the Passion, that self-emptying takes on a very concrete shape:

He lets go of the right to justify himself.

Think about that for a moment.

Most of our lives are spent trying to justify ourselves.

We explain. We defend. We correct. We manage how others see us. Even in small things, we feel the need to say: “That’s not fair,” “That’s not what I meant,” “Let me tell you what really happened.”

And often, that’s not wrong. Justice matters. Truth matters.

But here, before us, stands the one who is the Truth—and he does not speak in his own defense.

Why?

Because his mission is not to win the argument.

His mission is to save the world.

If Jesus had spoken—if he had dismantled the accusations, exposed the lies, demonstrated his innocence—he could have walked free.

But then we would still be bound.

So he remains silent.

Not because he has nothing to say, but because he has something greater to do.

And this is where Palm Sunday becomes uncomfortable.

Because we begin with triumph: crowds, palm branches, acclamation—“Hosanna to the Son of David!”

But the same voices will turn.

And Jesus knows this.

He enters Jerusalem not as someone who will be understood, but as someone who will be misunderstood to the very end.

And he accepts that.

This is the mind of Christ.

Not self-assertion, but self-giving.

Not the demand to be seen rightly, but the willingness to be seen wrongly—for the sake of love.

Now, we must be careful here.

This does not mean that Christians are called to become passive, or to accept injustice in every circumstance, or to never speak truth.

Jesus himself speaks boldly at other times.

But in the Passion, something deeper is revealed:

There are moments when love asks us not to win, not to justify, not to correct—but to entrust ourselves to God, even in misunderstanding.

Peter cannot do this.

When Jesus is arrested, Peter reaches for the sword.

Later, when questioned, Peter reaches for denial.

Both are forms of self-preservation.

But Jesus does neither.

He neither fights nor flees.

He gives himself.

And this is why, at the end of the reading from Philippians, we hear:

“Therefore God has highly exalted him...”

The exaltation comes after the self-emptying.

The glory comes through the cross.

The name above every name is given to the one who did not cling to his own name.

So what does this mean for us?

It means that the deepest mark of Christian life is not being right, not being vindicated, not even being understood.

It is learning, slowly and painfully, to share in the humility of Christ.

To let go of the need to secure ourselves.

To trust that our lives are held, not by our own self-defense, but by the Father who raises the dead.

There may be moments in your life—perhaps you already know them—when you are misunderstood.

When you are judged unfairly.

When something false is said, or assumed, or believed about you.

And everything in you wants to respond.

To explain. To fix it. To set the record straight.

And sometimes, you should.

But sometimes... the way of Christ is different.

Sometimes, the call is to remain silent—not out of fear, but out of trust.

To place your life into the hands of God, and to continue in love.

Because in the end, it is not our self-justification that saves us.

It is Christ.

The silent one.

The obedient one.

The one who, in refusing to save himself, becomes the salvation of the world.

So as we enter this Holy Week, let us ask for one grace:

To have the mind of Christ.

The courage to let go.

The humility to trust.

And the love that does not need to win—because it already belongs to God.

Amen.