**Palm Sunday April 10, 2022**

(Luke 19: 28-40) Is: 50: 4-7 Philippians 2: 6-11 Luke 22: 14-23-56

Throughout this liturgical year, in Luke’s gospel, we have been hearing Jesus say, “I must go up to Jerusalem.” The opening words of today’s gospel procession announce that, “Jesus proceeded on his journey up to Jerusalem.” Today we hear of the final part of his journey into the holy city. He is riding a colt and greeted by “the whole multitude of his disciples” who praise God, “for all the mighty deeds they have seen.” This is a climactic moment for Jesus and his disciples. Their journey to Jerusalem is ending and another is about to begin and the excited disciples don’t have a clue what is about to happen. At this climactic moment, we enter Holy Week with Jesus and his disciples. We are waving our palms in the air today because we have reason for hope that Jesus has overcome the powerful forces of evil. We know what the excited crowds at the entrance to the city didn’t know. At this point they smell triumph in the air, they expect a victorious Jesus to sweep into power and them along with him. In Jerusalem their plans would collapse and their hopes dashed. We know what they didn’t and couldn’t know at this stage of their journey with Jesus: that early on the morning of the third day, the first day of the week, while it was still dark, God would show his power and raise Jesus from the tomb. The powers of death would be overcome. Triumph would come from catastrophe; life from death; hope from despair and despite all appearances to the contrary, both then and now, evil would be defeated. God has contradicted our usual ways of dealing with evil and chosen instead the cross. As Paul says; a way that our world judges as foolishness and a scandal.

In contemplating the Incarnation, we witness how God became one of us in Jesus of Nazareth. In the Gospels we have accompanied Jesus in his earthly life, watching the divine generosity play out in his mercy and forgiveness along with the miracles he has worked. Countless lives have been saved and changed. Now God’s desire to save us from our inhumanity continues to unfold in Jesus’ passion. Neither the religious leaders nor the military powers in Jerusalem could ignore Jesus’ presence. His theological position, about God’s compassion for sinners and inclusion of outcasts, was too upsetting to the status quo the religious leadership was trying to maintain. Jesus’ teaching about God’s reign had gone too far for most of the religious establishment. At the center of Roman power, Jesus confronts the world’s might with all its oppression and cruelty. Once Jesus enters Jerusalem the powers in charge move quickly, he is promptly captured, sentenced and nailed to the cross. In Jesus’ passion the Jewish leaders and Pilate and Herod are concerned with self-seeking, face saving and power tripping. However, Jesus remains true to who he is, yet he allows his divinity to hide itself from them. This is what St. Paul is telling us in his words to the Philippians, “Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped.” The suffering of Jesus in his Passion is real. He is not playacting his way through a passion play. We must take the humanity of Jesus seriously enough to realize how much he loves us. Paul goes on to tell the Philippians, “he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found in human appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” Jesus remains faithful to his Father and the mission of the kingdom and accepts the very real consequences of that faithful obedience, which he does out of great love.

My sisters and brothers, pray through the Passion this week and ask for the grace of compassion and consider how you are called to be more compassionate in areas of your own life. What are the invisible crosses other people bear? How can I help carry them? Who is it that helps us carry our own burdens? Who are the crucified people of our world today?

This Holy Week, bend your knee before Jesus Christ our Lord present on the cross. Experience sorrow with Christ in sorrow; a broken spirit with Christ so broken; tears; and interior suffering because of the great suffering which Christ endured for each one of us.