

Palm Sunday

April 9, 2017



*Almighty ever-living God, who is an example of humility
for the human race to follow
caused our Savior to take flesh and submit to the cross,
graciously grant that we may heed his lesson of patient suffering
and so merit a share in his Resurrection.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Collect for Palm Sunday

Today we begin a momentous journey that happens year after year. St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, looked at life as a journey. In his Spiritual Exercises, he encouraged people to use their imagination as they reflected on various events in the life of Christ. He suggested that we place ourselves into the scene using all our five senses to truly experience what was happening. He also encouraged his followers to *find God in all things*. The following story can help us be rooted in the journey of Jesus from birth until death, experiencing the journey in this folklore.

Story of the Three Trees

Once upon a mountain top, three little trees stood and dreamed of what they wanted to become when they grew up.

The first little tree looked up at the stars and said: "I want to hold treasure. I want to be covered with gold and filled with precious stones. I'll be the most beautiful treasure chest in the world!"



The second little tree looked out at the small stream trickling by on its way to the ocean. "I want to be traveling mighty waters and carrying powerful kings. I'll be the strongest ship in the world!"

The third little tree looked down into the valley below where busy men and women worked in a busy town. "I don't want to leave the mountain top at all. I want to grow so tall that when people stop to look at me, they'll raise their eyes to heaven and think of God. I will be the tallest tree in the world."

Years passed. The rain came, the sun shone, and the little trees grew tall. One day three woodcutters climbed the mountain. The first woodcutter looked at the first tree and said, "This tree is beautiful. It is perfect for me." With a swoop of his shining axe, the first tree fell.

"Now I shall be made into a beautiful chest. I shall hold wonderful treasure!" the first tree said.

The second woodcutter looked at the second tree and said, "This tree is strong. It is perfect for me." With a swoop of his shining axe, the second tree fell.

"Now I shall sail mighty waters!" thought the second tree. "I shall be a strong ship for mighty kings!"

The third tree felt her heart sink when the last woodcutter looked her way. She stood straight and tall and pointed bravely to heaven.

But the woodcutter never even looked up. "Any kind of tree will do for me," he muttered. With a swoop of his shining axe, the third tree fell.

The first tree rejoiced when the woodcutter brought her to a carpenter's shop. But the carpenter fashioned the tree into a feedbox for animals.



The once beautiful tree was not covered with gold, nor with treasure. She was coated with sawdust and filled with hay for hungry farm animals.



The second tree smiled when the woodcutter took her to a shipyard, but no mighty sailing ship was made that day. Instead, the once strong tree was hammered and sawed into a simple fishing boat. She was too small and too weak to sail on an ocean, or even a river; instead, she was taken to a little lake.

The third tree was confused when the woodcutter cut her into strong beams and left her in a lumberyard.

"What happened?" the once tall tree wondered. "All I ever wanted was to stay on the mountain top and point to God..."

Many, many days and night passed. The three trees nearly forgot their dreams.

But one night, golden starlight poured over the first tree as a young woman placed her newborn baby in the feedbox.

"I wish I could make a cradle for him," her husband whispered.

The mother squeezed his hand and smiled as the starlight shone on the smooth and the sturdy wood. "This manger is beautiful," she said.



And suddenly the first tree knew he was holding the greatest treasure in the world.

One evening a tired traveler and his friends crowded into the old fishing boat. The traveler fell asleep as the second tree quietly sailed out into the lake.

Soon a thundering and thrashing storm arose. The little tree shuddered. She knew she did not have the strength to carry so many passengers safely through with the wind and the rain.

The tired man awakened. He stood up, stretched out his hand, and said, "Peace." The storm stopped as quickly as it had begun.

And suddenly the second tree knew he was carrying the king of heaven and earth.



One Friday morning, the third tree was startled when her beams were yanked from the forgotten woodpile. She flinched as she was carried through an angry jeering crowd. She shuddered when soldiers nailed a man's hands to her.

She felt ugly and harsh and cruel.

But on Sunday morning, when the sun rose and the earth trembled with joy beneath her, the third tree knew that God's love had changed everything.

It had made the third tree strong.

And every time people thought of the third tree, they would think of God.

That was better than being the tallest tree in the world.

- Author unknown

As Jesus entered Jerusalem triumphantly, this week parallels much of our journey.

When we reach Holy Thursday, we need to recall the many times we have celebrated meals with those who surround us. The example of Jesus in the foot washing is something we must emulate and be servants of all. We have been given the gift of Eucharist, Jesus, body soul and divinity, that we can consume and then be sent forth into our world to bring Jesus to a broken, crushed, redeemed people. We are also gifted to be present with Jesus in quiet adoration and love.

Good Friday is precisely that: "good" because it is the day that Jesus gave his life for us, crucifying our sinful selves with him. It is the day that we need to recall and offer all our pains and sorrows, our very lives, to be united with Jesus.

The Easter Vigil, Holy Saturday, is the Mother of all celebrations. We recognize that we begin in darkness, and the new light in the Easter fire is blessed and given to each of us, as the Paschal candle shares its light with the whole community. Salvation history is recalled through the Old Testament readings that are proclaimed this night. Finally, as Jesus was broken out of the tomb, our joy begins with the great singing of the Gloria.



The Gospel proclamation recalls the great mystery of Jesus rising from the dead. This mystery is first proclaimed by an earthquake (which was also part of Good Friday as heard in this day's gospel). As darkness covered the earth on Good Friday from noon until the death of Jesus at three p.m. the angel at the tomb appears as lightning.

Recalling our heritage with our Jewish brothers and sisters, as all yeast was removed from their homes, on Holy Thursday the Blessed Sacrament is removed from our Churches as is Holy Water, the reminder of our Baptism, the Door to all the other Sacraments.

At the Easter Vigil, the Easter Water is newly blessed and our fonts are refilled. Throughout the Universal Church people are baptized with this water and received into the Church and we each renew our baptismal commitment. Those received into the Church join each of us, receiving Eucharist for the first time. We then are sent forth as evangelizers, disciples of Jesus.

For the next seven weeks, as we celebrate Easter and are prepared to receive the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, we willingly are formed for this task by Word and Sacrament.

May we pray this week to be united with our God.

Loving God,

I am just beginning to realize how much you love me.

Your son, Jesus was humble and obedient.

He fulfilled your will for him

by becoming human and suffering with us.

*I ask you for the desire, to become more humble,
so that my own life might also bear witness to you.*

*I want to use the small sufferings I have in this world
to give you glory.*

Please, Lord, guide my mind with your truth.

Strengthen my life by the example of Jesus.

*Help me to be with Jesus in this week
as he demonstrates again his total love for me.*

*He died so that I would no longer
be separated from you.*

*Help me to feel how close you are
and to live in union with you.*

<http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/Lent/Daily-prayers-06.html>

We adore you O Christ, and praise you
because by your holy cross
You have redeemed the world.