

Homily by Most Rev. Felipe J. Estévez
for Palm Sunday 2015
Cathedral Basilica of Saint Augustine
March 29, 2015

The beginning of the historical passion of OLJC is so real in our hearts. We heard it, imagined it, felt compassion. We received a new insight into it from the Scriptures.

Today I invite you to focus on Philippians 2. It is a very special, ancient, and one of the earliest texts of the New Testament. Probably it was a hymn of the first Christians.

Let us look at the historical moment. Were first disciples they ashamed of what happened to their leader? Did he really fail to them? Death and failure were difficult to accept. Thus, interpreting the end of Jesus' life in the light of Holy Spirit was very important. Since the Holy Spirit always comes to our aid, the first Christians were able to find the meaning of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

Look at this Image (gesture). It reminds me of baptism: down and up. Another image may be taken from farming: seeds which die and fade away give rise to new flourishing and fruits. This reminds me of favorite book: The Giving Tree. Every part of it was cut off to the bone to provide food and shelter for others. It had less and less as time went on so that others would have more, more, and more—until there was nothing more to be cut off!

Consider the letter of Philemon: if Augustin could be here today he could say: We are grateful for the “Felix culpa” (original sin, we all know what it is). Paradoxically, our sin revealed such love of God!. Let us not be simplistic about the Cross. There are unbelievers because they can not accept a God who could be so humiliated. Nietzsche, a German Philosopher, had this difficulty with Christianity because he could not understand that this God would be so weak...

We believers need to appreciate the humility, the extent and depth of the incarnate redeeming love. We listen to the passion and we know the end of the story--the glory of the Lord and the glory. Alleluia! He is the Man, the new man. The Catechism calls this the paschal mystery—the work of the Redeemer is being subject to death and out of death it bring life in abundance!

Conversation with Fr Bernardin: few Catholics come to Easter Vigil, the Night the Exultet, the Sacraments, of Long readings. Is it because the celebration is long? Thousands of people wait for a long time for a new year, we can long for hours to watch a football game. The night when we celebrate his victory over death, the Victory of all humanity, but very few experience this night of light as what the poet St. John of the Cross called: *noche luminosa*.

The Servant of Suffering, the Redeemer of humankind was energized by Love... that vigor e gave rise to a powerful love that ha has a name: Eucharist. St. Thomas Aquinas calls the

Eucharist a Sacrament of passion. Cardinal Dolan, in his keynote address at the recent Eucharistic Congress, calls it Sacrifice, Meal, Presence.

On this unique Palm Sunday in a splendid house of the Lord, we are experiencing the whole passion at the beginning. The mass is the everlasting fruit of that passion. As the Creed says so well: For us, for our salvation he became one of us, for only one simple purpose: to save us from sin and death.