



Palm Sunday

Homily

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**Sunday 28 March 2021
St Mary's Cathedral, Perth**

In Saint John's Gospel, as Jesus comes closer to the time of his suffering and death, he is confronted by a group of people whom he knows would like to destroy him. In response to their threats of violence he says to them, *"I have done many good works for you, works from my Father. For which of these do you want to stone me?"*

This question takes us to the very heart of Holy Week, which we begin today with this celebration of Palm Sunday. How is it that a man who did nothing but good for others, should be so feared and so hated that people would seek to kill him? How is it that a man who set so many people free should find his hands bound and every vestige of freedom stripped from him as he is nailed to a cross?

As we grapple with this question, this mystery, in terms of what happened to Jesus over 2000 years ago, it is important that we acknowledge that the question is still relevant today. How is it that Jesus, who offers us nothing but life and hope, joy and peace, is relegated to the very edge of people's lives, including perhaps our own, if not excluded from so many people's lives altogether?

As the Gospels make clear the answer to the question which Jesus originally put to that crowd of people who accosted him – why did they wish to kill him - was simply that he challenged their comfortable existence, invited them to think more deeply than they wanted to about God and what God was asking of them and what place God wanted to have and should have in their lives. We can, I believe, say with great confidence that ultimately what made people so determined to destroy Jesus was that he revealed to them, and to everyone around them, the hardness of their hearts and the stubbornness of their thinking.

This morning, as we celebrate Palm Sunday and begin our journey with Jesus through this final week of his life, it seems to me that we are being invited, even challenged, to consider whether we too suffer from hardness of heart and stubbornness in our thinking. As we reflect, not so much on the place God should have in our lives, but more realistically on the place which God actually has in our lives each day, perhaps we might ask ourselves if we too have become too comfortable



in relationship to our faith; if we too would rather not think too deeply about who God really is and what God is asking of us; if we too are going to continue to build walls around us which protect us from sensing the Spirit of God calling us to something more, to something greater.

Jesus himself did not have a hard heart. Jesus himself did not for a moment deliberately close himself off from his relationship with the Father in Heaven, even though he knew that this relationship, and his fidelity to it, would bring him great suffering and even death.

In all of this, Jesus shows us the way. Let us, then, walk with him each day of this Holy Week, painful and challenging though this journey will be. In the end it is the only way to the fullness of life which Jesus has won for us through his fidelity, his courage and his obedience to God's will.

Walk with him through this week of suffering so that you can rise with him to the fullness of life and joy.