

Brothers and sisters,

This is probably the most humbling Gospel to have to preach on, because there is nothing anyone can do to add depth or greater significance to what we just heard. Jesus enters the Holy City of Jerusalem to cries of Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest. But these cheers soon turn to jeers, "Crucify Him, Crucify Him." How fickle crowds can be. I recall as a kid I hated having to be in the congregation and shouting those lines, "crucify him." It always made me feel uncomfortable, as if I were demanding that Jesus be crucified.

As I reflect further on this, I wonder if those lines really do apply to me. So often I am fickle in my relationship with Christ, just like the crowds in the Gospel. And I think we can all admit to this. I don't think any of us are under the delusion that we are without sin. We all waver in our fidelity to God. And probably we are most unsteady in our relationship with God when things are difficult.

Now contrast this with the fidelity of Christ. Christ who is faithful even in the most adversarial conditions - obedient to the point of death as St. Paul tells us. Because of this, God greatly exalted Him, giving him the name that is above every other name.

That's the fidelity we are called to. If we want to be exalted with Christ, we have to remain faithful to God. Our fidelity must not be fickle like that of the crowds. No, our fidelity must remain constant, both in the good times when the crowds are singing our praises, when they are shouting Hosanna's as they were when the Pope visited the United States a few years ago, and in times of trial, when the crowds are screaming "crucify," as we are currently experiencing with the media's response to the Pope over the past weeks. Don't get me wrong, I am not trying to deny that there is sin in our Church, or that there are sinful people including clerics. But, the fact that there are sinners in the Church, or even that there are sinners in positions of authority of the Church, does not mean that we should run away from the Church, that we should deny the Body of Christ as Peter did.

The abhorrent fact that Christians have been unable to live out their call to holiness, that they have not been able to abide by Church teachings, does not mean that the Church teachings are flawed. No, what it means is that we, as individuals are flawed. This is why the Church tells us not to put our faith in humanity, but to place it in God. This is why we cannot be our own judge of what is right and wrong, because we recognize that we are human beings. If we say that we are the judge of right and wrong, we cease to be faithful to God, and instead become faithful to ourselves. We cease to say I believe in God, and instead say I believe in myself.

As Christians, we must look beyond ourselves. We are called to be obedient to God, even to the point of death. Jesus himself warned us that if we wanted to follow Him, we would need to take up our cross, not run away from it in fear. Fear leads us to abandon Christ. It allows the sins of others to create such a scandal that it keeps us away from Christ. That's what happened to the Apostles. The sins of others, the sins of the crowd screaming, "crucify him," led them away from Christ, even to the point of denying him.

We live in fearful times. But don't let fear tear you away from Christ. Don't deny the sins of others, but also don't let their sins separate you from Christ.

Brothers and Sisters, Peace to you.