

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord | For Sunday, April 14th, 2019

The Antidote to Indifference

Written by Br. Silas Henderson, S.D.S

Luke 19:28-40

Philippians 2:6-11

Luke 22:14—23:56 or 23:1-49



[Elie Wiesel](#), a Holocaust survivor and Nobel prize-winning peace activist, wrote, “The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it’s indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it’s indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it’s indifference.”

Indifference, a lack of concern or a refusal to act in the face of injustice, is at the heart of human suffering. With this in mind, St. Maximilian Kolbe — who was executed by the Nazis on August 14, 1941, after having offered his own life to save another condemned prisoner — described indifference as “the most deadly poison of our times.”

In most cases, our indifference is born of comfort or complacency and a sense that “I shouldn’t get involved” or “It isn’t my business.” Sadly, we can all too easily recognize how these attitudes allow injustice, abuse, and neglect to continue and increase in too many places in the world today.

However tempting it might be to pretend otherwise, there are things worth living for, suffering for, and even dying for. This is why the question of Cuban poet [José Martí](#) — “When others are weeping blood, what right do I have to weep tears?” — calls us to an even more essential question: “What is the value of a life that is lived without anything worth dying for?”

The inconvenience, discomfort, sadness, and pain we may feel if we open our hearts and pay attention to what is happening in and to the world around us are the only real antidotes to indifference because those feelings should call us to action. And Palm Sunday and Holy Week reveal for us a God who, in Jesus, was anything but indifferent: “He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave ... he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:7a, 8).

This truth inspired the spiritual master [Henri Nouwen](#) to offer this reflection in his book, "The Road to Daybreak":

There is melancholy, but also peaceful acceptance. There is insight into the fickleness of the human heart, and also immense compassion. There is a deep awareness of the unspeakable pain to be suffered, but also a strong determination to do God's will. Above all, there is love, an endless, deep, and far-reaching love born from an unbreakable intimacy with God and reaching out to all people, wherever they are, were, or will be. There is nothing that he does not fully know. There is nobody whom he does not fully love.

Although Palm Sunday's ability to confront and confound our indifference can be startling and even frightening, the real grace of this celebration is in the opportunity it provides for us to renew our commitment to life in Christ. More than being some sort of extended passion play, the days of Holy Week challenge us to envision a life in which — rather than simply limping along from mistake to mistake — we take responsibility for our indifference, our self-preference, and our sins to become free to grow in love and our care about what we do to others, to creation, and to our own bodies, psyches, and souls.

In the end, living the mystery of the cross leaves no room for indifference because, as [St. Cyril of Alexandria](#) observed, "Christ's example of courage in God's service will be of great profit for us, for only by putting the love of God before our earthly life and being prepared when occasion demands to fight zealously for the truth, can we attain the supreme blessing of perfect union with God" (*Commentary on John*, 12.19).

Pray for the grace to enter into this holiest of weeks with an open heart, mind, and soul so that what is indifferent and unfeeling within you may be moved by the mystery of Christ's passion and resurrection, so that you may live out the grace of Easter in a world that is in need of the light of the risen Lord.

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PRAYER

Increase the faith of those
who place their hope in You, O God,
and graciously hear the prayers
of those who call on You,
that we, who today hold high these branches
to hail Christ in his triumph,
may bear fruit for You
by good works accomplished in him.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.
—from *The Roman Missal*