

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion | For Sunday, April 5 2020

God's Loving Plan

Written by Angie Windnagle

Isaiah 50:4-7

Philippians 2:6-11

Matthew 26:14—27:66

Or 27:11-54



When I was expecting my second son, I remember spending hours poring over decisions on his birth and what I wanted things to look like. Every step of the labor and delivery process was already planned out in my mind. So, when at 40 weeks pregnant and ready to make this plan reality, I experienced a partial placental abruption, I was completely blindsided. Everything that I had anticipated for his birth was undone and I was sent on a completely new path in that single moment. In God's providential care, my son was born healthy. There was so much suffering that came from that birth, but that moment was also a vital turning point for me as a mother and Catholic and I wouldn't change it. God allowed it all for a good I couldn't see yet. I learned the profound lesson that our ways are very often not God's ways.

This Lent, our entire world has learned a similar lesson at a much larger scale. Many of us planned to spend our days preparing for the Lord's Passion and Resurrection in a very specific way. Like many of my friends, I had mapped out exactly what I was fasting from and the spiritual practices I would be implementing in order to create a little curated Lenten journey I thought fit to help prepare my heart for these holy days. However, this year we have seen in God's providential care that he has allowed a new way to be carved out for many Catholics this year. A way that God may see fit to call even more hearts to conversion as the world navigates the immense challenges of a pandemic. We've been

called to give up far more than most had planned. At the same time we've been called to renew our hope and trust in the God who sees beyond any earthly suffering, not as a passive spectator but as the one who took on flesh in order to feel deeply the pangs of human suffering, in order to redeem it. At the end of Lent many of us are realizing God's plans were not our plans, and His plans will bear so much more fruit even if we don't see it yet.

The canticle in the second reading helps us commit to heart this reality: no matter how deep our suffering is or how tragic our world becomes, no matter how many plans are disrupted, we have a God who is so profoundly on our side that nobility and earthly power mean nothing to Him. He has literally cloaked Himself in the weight of our sin and sorrow in order to save us and ensure we get back to Him. If I had planned for a king to save the world, the last thing I would plan is a suffering servant who had to endure a horrendous death. But in His mercy and goodness, God planned a way that would convince even the hardest heart that we are never alone, and we will someday be in paradise with Him if we remain faithful and trust in Him.

Author Fr. Jacques Philippe teaches us about this trust in his book "Fire & Light" when he says:

"To the extent we have riches or place our trust in security and human support, we can't really practice hope, which consists in counting on God alone. God sometimes permits us to go through trials, the loss of some of our security, even lamentable falls, in order that we learn in the end to count on nothing but Him and His mercy. Peter is a good example: he had to fall, denying Christ during his Passion, in order to learn not to lean on his own virtues, his own courage, the momentum of human enthusiasm, but only on the love of Jesus."

PRAYER

Anima Christi

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
O good Jesus, hear me.
Within thy wounds, hide me.
Suffer me not to be separated from thee.
From the malicious enemy, defend me.
In the hour of my death, call me
and bid me come unto thee,
That with thy Saints I may praise thee,
Forever and ever.
Amen.

-St. Ignatius of Loyola

Let us welcome Palm Sunday and our Lord's Passion this year with new hearts that have been formed by God's will, even if it didn't come as we had planned, leaning into the love of Christ and his wounded heart.

Angie Windnagle