

St Thomas of the Air Chapel  
 Passion Sunday  
 March 29, 2020  
 rmcneely+

Today marks the beginning of what the Church calls “Passiontide”  
 A two week devotion to the Passion of Christ.  
 A fitting way to conclude the sacrifices of the Lenten Season.  
 A poignant reminder of the price Jesus paid for the sins  
     That we have confronted in our Lenten fast  
     And discipline.  
 We mark the day with veils  
     Violet veils  
         The color signifying penitence, Lent  
         The veils breaking the visual connection to Christ.  
         A reminder of what life may be like  
             If there had been no Redeemer at Calvary.

Passion is one of those words that has evolved far from its original meaning.

The word comes to us from the Latin “*pasio*” meaning : suffering.  
 Passion to the Christians of 1611 retained its original meaning: to suffer.

Modern mankind has completely flipped the meaning of passion  
     And unless you know the heritage of the concept  
     You are lost and confused  
     When the church points you toward Passion  
     or the Passion of Christ.  
     The ancient art and music loses its appeal  
     And modern mankind is diverted from an appreciation  
         Of the event that changed the world  
         Forever.

Some say that evolution of the word  
     The bastardization of the word passion

Was no random occurrence.

But a calculated trick to separate us from the truth  
From God.

Well, we are here to help stay the course,  
immerse ourselves in the raw pain and excruciating agony  
of these last two weeks of Jesus life with us on Earth.

We relive it  
Walk with Him every step of the way.  
Every triumph  
Every humiliation  
Every insult  
Every threat  
Every anxiety  
Every knot of the ropes of the arrest  
Every accusation at His trials  
Every step toward the cross along the Via Dolorosa  
Every stumble and every fall  
Every lash of the scourge tearing into his flesh  
Every blow of the hammer that drove the nails  
Every drop of His blood  
Every word He spoke from the cross in His last 3 hours  
His final breath.

We are there for it all.

Walk with Him and we can almost smell it

Hear it

Feel it

Almost taste the passion of Our Lord.

And we are changed.

Every time we walk through Passiontide

We are changed by the Passion of Jesus Christ.

This year our journey may not take place in the Church

And not in the company of each other.

In some ways that makes it even more difficult and meaningful.

We will do it on our own.

The way He did.

I pray that the shelter in place order will expire in time for us to be together for Maundy Thursday

For Good Friday

And for a glorious celebration of the Resurrection.

But that may not be this year.

And if not

I have cleared it with the Bishop

that should that turn out to be the case:

We will have our Palm Sunday

We will have our Holy Week

We will have our Maundy Thursday

We will have our Good Friday

And we will have our celebration of the Resurrection

Together in the wonderful little miracle church

But out of time. Later in the Year on a date to be determined.

But in this Passion Sunday, let us turn to the Gospel for today

Jesus is boldly preaching in the Temple in Jerusalem as He walks inexorably to the Cross,

in the final months of His ministry on Earth.

The Pharisees have again accused Him

of falsehood and worse.

In what may be the foreshadowing of the Jewish trials

On the night in which He was betrayed

This may be the event that Caiaphas, the High Priest

Tried so desperately to prove up  
To support his charge of blasphemy,

In an exchange that began earlier in the reading  
Jesus takes them head on

He declares the He is sent from the Father  
That He is from above and they from below  
That if they do not believe that Jesus is from God  
They will die in their sins.  
That they seek to kill Him  
because Jesus' word has no place in them  
That when they lift Him up  
then shall they know who He is.  
He tells them they are of their father the devil  
And do the lusts of their father.  
Jesus directly and clearly declares Himself  
Clearly His hour is nigh and He no longer  
Seeks to cloak who He is.

This is the white-hot argument that precedes today's Gospel  
where the story picks up.

The Pharisees then accuse Him of being a Samaritan  
And possessed of a devil.  
Jesus tells them that if a man keep His sayings  
He will never see death.  
Jesus alludes to everlasting life with God.  
but the Pharisees do not comprehend.

They ask if Jesus thinks of Himself as being greater than Abraham  
The Father of the Jews,  
Or greater than the prophets  
People sent by God.

Jesus confounds them. He says:

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day.  
He saw it and was glad.”

The Pharisees accuse Him the more:

You are not 50 years old and say you have seen Abraham.  
Who died thousands of years before.

Jesus has the last word

Before Abraham was,  
I AM.

The Pharisees explode.

Jesus has used the term I AM

The sacred name of God, I AM

That no Jew was permitted to say.

Go back to Moses and the burning bush

When God appointed Moses to lead the Jews from Egypt.

Moses said, no one would believe that He spoke with God

And asked to tell them God's name to establish his credibility

God replied: “I AM that I am”.

In Hebrew it is pronounced Yahweh.

The Pharisees gathered stones

Jesus escaped.

So we begin our final two weeks of Lent

With the firm assurance of Our Lord

He is the Messiah

The only begotten Son of God

Our Saviour in a time of need.

Who will defeat evil

Who will open the doors of Heaven and eternal life.

But first,

He must pay the awful price.  
The price of our sins.

Walk with Him  
Even if it is this year a virtual walk  
in the St Thomas of the Air Chapel.  
Walk with Him  
From His triumphal entry into Jerusalem  
To His death and Resurrection.  
It is a walk that may just change your life.