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Palm Sunday with Form 1: Procession, cycle C

By [Don L. Fischer](#)

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 50:4-7; Philippians 2:6-11; Luke 22:14-23:56

*The children of Jerusalem
welcomed Christ the King.
They spread their cloaks before him
and loudly praised the Lord:
Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*
---Entrance antiphon, Palm Sunday

We begin today the most solemn week in the church year. It begins with Jesus' triumphant entrance into Jerusalem. People are rejoicing. People are excited about this Messiah who has come to save them from their sin, to bring them new life. What is so important to notice is that Jesus doesn't come riding into Jerusalem on a great horse. He comes on a donkey, an image of an ordinary animal of burden. There is nothing triumphant or powerful in that means of entry. What Jesus is trying to say is: "I come into this situation not as one filled with human power to conquer what is there. I come in powerlessness." That is the hardest thing for us to comprehend about this figure Jesus: He teaches us all about the power of powerlessness. Of submission. Of giving in. Of giving in to illusion and half-truth — knowing exactly what it is and not buying it for one second — but recognizing it for what it is, naming it, and then letting it try to do its work on us. The mystery of this great week is that we go through many facets of the life of Jesus in this one week. In the moments of Holy Thursday, Jesus tells us that he longs to feed and nurture us. He wants us to be sustained and supported not only by his example but by the grace he has promised to win for us so that we can do the work of being powerless. On Friday, we recognize what it is like to be powerless. We realize that giving ourselves over to that negative power allows it to do its work against us without ultimately harming us. And finally, we share in Jesus' triumphant resurrection, recognizing that evil did not destroy him — and it will not destroy us.

In the crucifixion of Jesus, we need to understand that our Savior is taking all of the negativity upon himself so that it doesn't do to us what it seemingly did to him. He takes the negativity on himself and frees us from the fear of what that evil could do to us. To show that suffering and evil did not destroy him but only strengthened him, Jesus comes back on Easter Sunday. He is filled with energy, light, and truth. This Paschal Mystery —

the process of God trying to teach us a new way of life, a different approach to the world — is why this week is so holy. It is obviously designed to invite us into this work. If we enter into this work, we will become holy. The holiness we are called to participate in is a way of life. It is not so much a way of life that is sinless, because that is basically what I grew up in my religion thinking holiness was all about. I thought holiness was about not making mistakes. I recognize now that holiness is not so much about that kind of purity. Holiness is about a purity of intention. A purity of heart. A purity of truth. What Jesus is simply inviting us to do is to embrace the plan as it is. The plan is that we are invited to trust, radically trust, in every single thing that God is asking us to do. Our destiny is the living out a story that is always, always, for us. No one would believe listening to Jesus that we have this incredible invitation on his part. While we watch him go to his death, we are being invited into new life. An invitation to be in a disposition where we are free. There are two things Jesus said to his disciples and to all of those he wanted to receive his message: “I am doing two things. I am trying to give you the truth, and I am trying to set you free. I want you to know what is, I want you to sense what is real, and to sense that the real destiny we are all invited into is good. We can trust in it. We can submit to it. We can give ourselves over to it without fear. Because it is there, planned for us by God, to always bring both us and the world to a better place.” That’s the freedom.

What we are free from is not just our own sinfulness, our own propensity for illusions and half-truths, but we are really free from all of the fear. All the fear and anxiety that is so much a part of our lives when we are so desperately trying to make things different from the way they really are. Or to look at things and judge them as not good. And yet, they seem very real to us that they will happen. Once we have something that we feel could occur in our lives, and we believe that if it did it would be really horrible and terrible — if it’s something that we have no control over and God’s spirit has no control over changing it, if we feel we are vulnerable to an evil spirit — we will be afraid. We will be anxious. The great task is to believe that this God of ours has created a world that cannot harm us. That cannot destroy us. The things that we imagine can destroy us are truly illusions. They are not real. That takes an extraordinary act of faith, to believe in that. I know that there are things that I could believe in as real that are illusionary and I can go with that illusion until it will bring me to a place of destruction. That’s the classic dilemma we get caught in. To give an example, it would be like if I really believed that something like smoking was really good for me. That it wouldn’t harm me. That’s not the truth. So I believe in the illusion that smoking just makes me feel good. It builds me up. It doesn’t hurt my lungs. I believe that illusion. Can we see how believing that illusion can lead us to an unhealthy state where we might be suffering things God never intended?

That’s what Jesus came to free us from: Those kinds of illusions. If he tells us the truth, if we embrace the truth and know that these kinds of action can have a really negative consequence, then we are free. It doesn’t mean that we are free of our addiction to smoking. It doesn’t mean that we don’t choose it and then suffer — but it means that God has given us the wisdom to know the truth. What he is asking us to do is to follow that truth so we can have life. Somehow, when I know that the truth is available and there is a way I can choose that is always ultimately good for me, then the anxiety and fear begin to recede. What an incredible, mysterious event in the life of Jesus that we celebrate this week! Peter heard about Jesus’ suffering and thought it was the stupidest idea he had ever heard of. I think if we are honest, that is the most natural reaction most of us have to that incredible story: That the way Jesus saved the world was by giving himself over to the truth of it. What Jesus knew is that these people couldn’t destroy him. He knew that. Yet everything looked like it was destroying him. Jesus knew that he could rise from the dead.

He knew that death wasn't the end. He knew that somehow, in his gut, he could give himself over to all the illusionary elements and not lose. Everybody said, "Oh no. If you do this, it will be all over. It will be lost." That's the gift of grace — to know what is real and to submit and to trust in what is real. And then by submitting to the truth, we come to new life.

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A Camel on the Roof?

By [Rev. Walter J. Burghardt, SJ](#)

Some months ago I ran across a story that intrigued my imagination. It was reproduced from a collection of lives of saints. Not Catholic saints—the saints of Islam. The central figure in the story is Ebrahimibn Adam, king of Balkh (now, I believe, a district in North Afghanistan). Ebrahim was a wealthy man, but at the same time very sincere, very concerned, in matters religious—what we might call the search for God. One night the king was roused from sleep by a fearful stumping on the roof above his bed. Alarmed, he shouted: "Who's there?" "A friend," came the reply from the roof. "I've lost my camel." Perturbed by such stupidity, Ebrahim screamed: "You fool! Are you looking for a camel on the roof?" "You fool!" the voice answered. "Are you looking for God in silk clothing, and lying on a golden bed?" These simple words, we are told, filled the king with terror; he rose from his sleep to become a remarkable saint.

The camel on the roof raises a pertinent question this Sunday of passion and palms. In fact, the camel on the roof is a profound prelude to the whole of Holy Week. It compels us to ask ourselves: Where are you looking for your God? Which raises a prior question: Where is our God to be found? And a final question: Where do we go from here? A few moments on each.

I

First, where is our God to be found? If your philosophy is scholastic and your theology Catholic, you will answer: everywhere. He lives in all the world. He is everywhere, in every nook and cranny of His universe. Look up—at the sun or the stars or the trailing clouds; He is there. Look down—into the hollows of the earth; He is there. Look out—at the desert or the city; He is there. Look in—to the depths of your soul and the marrow of your bones; He is there. Look about you—wherever your eye falls, He is there. He is everywhere because He is *active* everywhere, because without Him the sun could not shine nor the raindrop fall; without Him the cactus could not grow nor the heart beat; without Him you could not know Him or love Him.

All this is true, and there is a wild richness here. But Passion/Palm Sunday stresses something terribly different; it tells you that your God is to be found where no one in his or her right mind would expect to find Him. It tells you that He is to be found in our flesh, in "the form of a slave" (Phil 2:7). It tells you that this Son of God is to be found not in silk clothing but in swaddling cloths, not on a golden bed but in a feeding trough. It tells you to look in a garden called Gethsemane, the "oil press" where the God-man's "sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground" (Lk 22:44), where God-with-us begged God the Father "Don't let me die!" (cf. v. 42). It tells you to find your God

in a prisoner mocked, blindfolded, and beaten; kept captive while a convicted murderer went free; crucified between two criminals while "darkness lay over the whole earth" (Lk 23:44). It tells you to find your God in a man who "breathed his last" (v. 46) in an agony of flesh and spirit few human beings have ever tasted.

The liturgy of Passion/Palm Sunday tells you to read the story told by Luke with the eyes of Paul, tells you to make your own the lyrical early hymn you heard in the second reading. Jesus Christ,

though he was in the form of God
[pre-existent and divine],
did not count equality with God
a thing to be clutched,
but emptied himself of it,
to take on the form of a slave
and become like men.
And having assumed human form,
he still further humbled himself
with an obedience that meant death,
even death on a cross.
That is why God has so highly exalted him
and given him the name which is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess,
to the glory of God the Father,
that Jesus Christ is Lord!
(Phil 2:6—11)

For those who have eyes to see, where does Passion/Palm Sunday locate our Lord? In humiliation and obedience, beneath bone and blood. Simply, pinned to a cross, hung on a tree.

II

If our Scripture and our liturgy find our God on a cross, this raises a challenge: Where, in point of fact, do you and I look for Him? Rarely do we resemble the man looking for his lost camel on a roof. I am not denying that God is everywhere. I am simply suggesting that we rarely look for Him in the *unlikely* places where He has promised to be. Read the Old Testament book of Exodus, the liberation of Israel from Egypt, and the book of Numbers, Israel's wandering in the wilderness. Oh yes, the people of Israel found God when He drowned the hosts of Pharaoh in the sea of reeds. They sang ecstatically:

I will sing to the Lord,
for He has triumphed gloriously;
the horse and his rider
He has thrown into the sea.
The Lord is my strength and my song,
and He has become my salvation;
this is my God, and I will praise Him,
my father's God, and I will exalt Him.

(Exod 15:1—2)

But it was difficult for them to find Yahweh in the wilderness. When Moses delayed his return from the God of Sinai, they fashioned a new god out of their gold. They loved their God when first He rained manna upon them; but they got fed up with the manna, and wept for the meat and fish they had gotten free in Egypt, "the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic" (Num 11:4—5). Yahweh brought them to a land flowing with milk and honey, but they murmured because they were afraid of being killed—so much so that the Lord said: "How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs which I have wrought among them?" (Num 14:11).

Take the Gospels. Peter could find his Lord on the mount of transfiguration; but when Jesus told the disciples that he had to "suffer many things...and be killed" (Mt 16:21), Peter "began to rebuke him, saying: 'God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you'" (v. 22). And surely you remember the two disciples on the road to Emmaus after Christ's crucifixion: "We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel" (Lk 24:21). We *had* hoped...

Much the same thing has happened time and again in the history of the Church. In the fifth century a powerful patriarch named Nestorius proclaimed: "A born God, a dead God, a buried God I cannot adore."¹ Just another confused theologian, you may say; but Nestorius was raising a question that has tormented good Christians through the ages: Was that writhing, blood-raw convict who cried to his Father "Why have you abandoned me?" (Mt 27:46) really God's only Son?

Even today, many a Christian can live comfortably only with Easter Sunday; Good Friday is too much. Perhaps I should ask myself: Is it only on Easter that the exclamation of doubting Thomas bursts from my lips: "My Lord and my God!" (Jn 20:28)? You know, even now, at this moment, the risen Christ somehow still carries the wounds of his passion—glorified indeed, but still the scars of Calvary. To be a Christian, I suspect, is to look for a camel on a roof.

III

Which leads to my third question: Where do we go from here? How do we move all this from the abstract to the concrete, from theology to life, from the first century to the twentieth, from Jerusalem to Scottsdale? After all, Jesus is no longer on a cross, even when I find him there in history. Granted I reproduce his dying in my baptism and in my personal Calvary, he no longer suffers, he dies no more. "Christ *has* died; Christ is risen." We once transported the London Bridge to Arizona. Can we transport the bleeding body of Jesus?

Yes, indeed; for he told us how: "In so far as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). The Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins sang lyrically how "Christ plays in ten thousand places,/ Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his/ To the Father through the features of men's faces."² Now it's not very hard to find Christ, to discover God's image, on lovely faces (Brooke Shields?), on loving faces (Mother Teresa?), on strong faces (John Paul II?), on friendly faces (Alan Alda?), on proud faces (Thomas More?), on free faces (Oscar Romero?), on faces that age gracefully (Katie Hepburn?). Indeed Christ is there. And yet, he told us to look for him especially in

"the least" of his brothers and sisters, those who seem insignificant, those who are in trouble or forgotten. We are to find him, therefore, in stomachs swollen by starvation, on lips parched with thirst, in hands arthritic with age, on faces torn with terror, in eyes empty in hopelessness, flesh eaten by cancer, bodies raging behind prison bars, strangers threatening our turf, a face with a different color.

Here, my friends, is today's Calvary. No longer limited to Jerusalem; the cross casts its shadow over the face of the earth. Whether it's twelve million Russians imprisoned in the Gulag Archipelago or thousands of Cambodian refugees tenting Thailand with their malnutrition and malaria, whether it's Latin America with seven out of ten in abject poverty or Appalachia powerless under the new colonials, whether it's Afghans raped by the Soviet war machine or women and children blasted to bits in the north of Ireland, here and everywhere Christ is crucified again in his children.

But I need not board a plane to find my thorn-crowned God; I need not even fly to Phoenix! He meets me day after day in Washington, D.C. I pass so close to the very people Jesus specifically cited: the hungry and the thirsty, the naked and the stranger, the sick and the shackled. I pass so close to them, and so often I pass them by, as the Gospel priest passed by the poor fellow felled by thieves. I face so many others who in our society fall under "the least." I mean the black and the Hispanic, asking only for the dignity that is their birthright, asking to be recognized as images of God. I mean the elderly lady or gentleman who wants only my ear—that ear I reserve for "the beautiful people" or the National Symphony or (God save the mark!) Howard Cosell. I mean the young student who is "down," has no personality to speak of, needs someone to "dump" on; I too easily plead other commitments. I mean all those who are afraid or alone, ridden with guilt or with acne, torn between security and risk, in so many ways hovering between heaven and hell.

Early this month Pope John Paul II launched his Central American pilgrimage in Costa Rica, on the tarmac of San Jose's international airport. I come, he said, "to share the pain" of Central America, to provide a voice for "the tears or deaths of children, the anguish of the elderly, of the mother who loses her children, of the long lines of orphans, of those many thousands of refugees, exiles or displaced persons searching for a home, of the poor with neither home nor work."³

No need for you to join John Paul in Costa Rica or El Salvador. The passion of Christ is being played out right here—in Arizona, in Phoenix and Scottsdale, on red reservations and white streets, among Mexicans legal and illegal, perhaps in your own home. Christ is there, not by some vague, eerie presence, but in each and every person. Reach out to someone—to anyone in agony of flesh or spirit. Share that person's pain; for that pain is the passion of Christ, if you can believe St. Paul (cf. Col 1:24). Please God, on that Calvary where another Christ hangs, in your divine "foolishness" (1 Cor 1:25) you will discover, or rediscover, your God. Believe me, it beats looking for a camel on a roof!

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Let Go Of Yesterday

By [Rev. Walter J. Burghardt, SJ](#)

For anyone with a liturgical memory, the Sunday that opens Holy Week can be confusing. Not too long ago, the two Sundays that precede Easter were called, respectively, Passion Sunday and Palm Sunday. Then they were titled, respectively, the First Sunday of the Passion and the Second Sunday of the Passion. Now the second Sunday before Easter is simply the Fifth Sunday of Lent, and the last Sunday before Easter is Passion/Palm Sunday.

If you must preach on Passion/Palm Sunday, the change and confusion become critical. Is this merely a change in title? After all, the liturgical content is basically unchanged. We recall Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, then we get down to the grim story of the Passion. We read the two traditional Gospels: hosannas and mockery, triumph and tragedy, life and death. What has changed?

Duller of understanding than usual, it took most of Lent 1979 before I grasped what the new nomenclature is telling us. We dare not divide the paschal mystery into a season of dying (Lent) and a season of rising (Easter). Indeed there was a chronological sequence to the events in Jesus' life. But to stress the history is to miss the mystery. Jesus Christ is risen-and even during Lent we dare not pretend he has not. Lent, therefore, must be an increasingly more intense involvement in the whole paschal mystery, which is the mystery of dying-rising-his and ours. Two sides of a single coin.

How to clarify the liturgical celebration and how to touch it to daily Christian living such was my task on Passion/Palm Sunday 1979 before the community that worships at noon-ten in Dahlgren Chapel on the campus of Georgetown University.

What we do here today is frightfully important. Important not only for the way we celebrate this liturgy but for the way we celebrate life. Important for the way we worship, important for the way we live.

You see, it's a puzzling Sunday. Today's liturgy is a paradox, if not a contradiction. We have two names for this Sunday: it is Palm Sunday and it is Passion Sunday. In the procession we pray "Today we honor Christ our triumphant King," but in the Mass we pray "You have given the human race Jesus Christ our Savior as a model of humility." In the procession we sing "Hosanna to the King," but

in the Responsorial Psalm we sing "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

The reading from Paul reminds us that Jesus "emptied himself ... became obedient unto death," then proclaims that "every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Phil 2:7-8, 11). The Gospel of the procession cries "Behold, your King comes to you" (Mt 21:5), but the Gospel of the Mass ends "Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last" (Mk 15:37).

You have a tension here. You have palms bending in adoration and reeds that strike a thorn-crowned head. You have a king and convict. You have hosannas and mockery. You have triumph and tragedy. All in the one liturgy. And so we must ask two questions. First, what are we doing here, right now, in this liturgy? Second, how should what we are doing here affect what we do in the rest of our lives?

I

First then, what are we doing here, right now, in this liturgy: In my past, we did today what we did on all the other Sundays of Lent, what we did all through Lent, what we did in a specially solemn way through Holy Week: we reproduced, we re-presented, we lived again the sufferings of Christ, his dying. Why? So that on Easter we could celebrate his rising. We were looking forward to Easter dawn, when Jesus would rise from the dead and we would rise, with him. Today tragedy, tomorrow triumph. Lent, dying; Easter rising.

I have news for you: this is liturgical nonsense. Lent is no more a preparation for the resurrection of Jesus than Advent was; preparation for the birth of Jesus. This is to emphasize the history at the expense of the mystery. There is indeed a history, a

chronology: from desert to cross to resurrection. But Passion Sunday like all of Lent, gets its liturgical meaning from Easter. And what is Easter? Easter is the paschal mystery, and the paschal mystery is duality: the dying-and-rising of Jesus. And the fact is, he has already died and risen; we dare not pretend that he has not. Lent is not the dying of Jesus, Easter his rising. The whole of Lent is a progressively more intense initiation into the paschal mystery, into the twin reality of Jesus dead and risen.

If you need proof, go back over each Sunday this Lent. Each Sunday Gospel proclaimed not only dying but rising -in death life. The first Sunday: Jesus in the desert (Mk 1:12-15). The biblical desert is not only the place of wandering and confusion, of hungering and thirsting, of temptation and searching; it is the place of discovery and covenant, of intimacy and love and new life. It is the Lord who leads into the desert. Remember, in Hosea, how the Lord speaks about Israel? "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her" (Hos 2:14).

The second Sunday: the Transfiguration (Lk 9:29b-36). On the journey of death, Jesus is revealed as the person of life. On the death march, the disciples see his glory. But they fail to grasp the death-life duality. In John Gallen's vivid paraphrase "Who needs to go up to Jerusalem and die? It is good for us to be here. Where? The Sinai Hilton, that's where! "

The third Sunday: destruction of the temple (Jn 2:13-25). In the midst of destruction, resurrection. "Destroy this temple [my body] and in three days I will raise it up" (Jn 2:19).

The fourth Sunday: darkness and light (Jn 3:14-21). In the midst of darkness, Jesus is presented as the person of light. Not at the end of the darkness-in its very midst. The fifth Sunday: the grain of wheat (Jn 12:20-33). In dying, the grain of wheat yields a rich harvest. In dying, Jesus lives; in dying, he gives life.

So too for today, Passion/Palm Sunday. We are a historical people; Christianity is rooted in history; and so we do well to recall and reproduce the events that took place when Jesus entered the city of his dying. But if we stop at the history, we miss the mystery. Today we enter with growing intensity into the whole paschal mystery. Not palms or passion; both. Not triumph or tragedy; triumph in tragedy. Not a dying or a rising Christ; a dying-rising Christ. That is why the paschal mystery will open most intensely not next Sunday but with the evening Mass of the Last Supper; for the paschal mystery is one mystery: life in and through death.

This Lenten Sunday, then, why is triumph wed to tragedy, kingship to degradation, hosannas to curses, joy to sorrow? Because only the Resurrection makes sense out of Passion Sunday. And we are not preparing for the Resurrection; it has already happened! We know how the story turned out, and we should not pretend we do not. Even in Lent, in Holy Week. And not only the history, what factually happened: Jesus died, then he rose to life again. But the mystery as well, God's plan from eternity: life leaped from death; death was the springboard for his rising. That is why I find it enlightening and thrilling that when the risen Jesus appeared to his disciples, he showed them the wounds of his dying (cf. Jn 20:26-27). The mystery is one mystery: dying -rising.

II

This leads to my second point: how should what we are doing here affect what we do in the rest of our lives? That it ought to touch our lives is clear. For liturgy, as sacrament of Christian belief, does two things: it gives expression to the faith experience of a people, and it molds that experience, shapes it, fashions it.

But how? What does Passion Sunday say to Christian experience, to the shape of my life? Underlying the answer is a truth I left out of my first point, a truth essential to the paschal mystery: Jesus Christ died and rose for us. Not only did he himself journey to Jerusalem; he commanded us to follow him on that journey. It is a journey that goes to life through death; and death gives life not only when we breathe our last, but all through our Christian existence. Because the journey is structured that way, we cannot avoid talking about

death, about our dying, our daily, ceaseless dying.

In our journeying to life, we die in two ways; for death comes to us from two sources. Death comes to us, first, from sin-from the sins of our own fashioning and from "the sin of the world," all the weight and burden of human transgression from Adam to Antichrist. And "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23). Not the soul leaving the body; not some abstract absence of God. The results of radical sin, of "mortal" sin, are within me. It unmakes me, undoes me, unravels me, misshapes me. In sin, in radical sin, I am a different person; for Life has left me.

To the death that is sin we have been dying since our baptism. And the dying is never ended. For dying to sin is not something negative; dying to sin is turning to Christ, and turning to Christ is a constant conversion. If sin is rejection, dying to sin is openness: openness to God's presence poured out on us through every flower that opens its chalice petals to us, every breeze that caresses our skin, every man or woman whose eyes meet ours, the awesome presence of the Holy One Himself tabernacled within us. In dying to sin, we live to God.

Death comes to us in a second way: from the very shape of the journey-even apart from sin. For the human journey to go forward, to move ahead, you have to let go of where you've been, let go of the level of life where you are now, so as to live more fully. It's never far from you. Whether it's turning 21, 40, or 65; whether it's losing your health or your hair, your looks or your lustiness, your money or your memory, a person you love or a possession you prize; whether it's yesterday's applause or today's rapture; whether it's as fleeting as Fort Lauderdale or as abiding as grace - you have to move on. Essential to the human pilgrimage, to the Christian journey, is a self-emptying more or less like Christ's own emptying: time and again, from womb to tomb, you have to let go. And to let go is to die a little. It's painful, it can be bloody; and so we hang on, we clutch our yesterdays like Linus' blanket, we refuse to grow.

But no, it will not do-especially for a Christian. You are commanded to let go. Not invited-commanded: "Follow me!" It is a sticky, risky thing, this letting go of yesterday, if only because you cannot be certain where it will lead, except that the journey is in the tracks of one who laid aside his divine glory to clothe himself in our flesh, let go of Nazareth and his mother, the hill of Transfiguration and the garden of Gethsemane, the sinners he had touched with his forgiveness and that unpredictable band of mixed-up apostles-let go of the very miracle of being alive.

The comforting thing, the thrilling thing, is that you let go for a purpose; kenosis, emptying, dying is not its own end. You let go of yesterday because only by letting go, only by reaching out into a shadowed future, can you grow into Christ, come to be increasingly conformed to his dying-rising. Only by letting go can you grow in loving communion with God, with the crucified and risen images of God, with the breath-taking beauty of His creation all about you.

Only by dying, not only to sin but to yourself, can you come fully to life. You don't, forget your yesterdays; they are part of who you are today. You simply refuse to live in them, to wallow in them, to pretend that there, in some near or distant yesterday, there life reached its peak or died its death.

Many years ago I was intensely moved by a movie. It was titled Come Back, Little Sheba. The male lead, Burt Lancaster, is a reformed alcoholic. His wife, Shirley Booth, is a devoted woman with a big heart; but she bores him endlessly by ceaselessly recalling the good old days. Remember when ... ? Time and again she walks out on the porch calling for Little Sheba, the dog that has disappeared, the dog that is a symbol of those bygone days, a symbol of dashed hopes. And for twenty years these two good people live what Thoreau called "lives of quiet desperation."

No, my brothers and sisters, stop calling for Little Sheba. Passion Sunday is a different

call: the paschal mystery, your involvement in the dying-rising of Christ, is now. Die a little, to live more richly. Let your yesterdays be yesterdays, the joys and the sorrows, so that today you may listen to the Lord's voice (cf. Ps 95:7), receive his flesh and blood for today's food and drink, go out to a little a of God's world where crucified men and women need so badly a Christian who has died to sin and self, who lives to God and others ... today.

From Tell the Next Generation © 1980 Paulist Press

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