

Homily - Palm Sunday

The drama of the Passion, just now proclaimed in the Gospel of St. Mark, dominates this Eucharistic celebration. It is well that we remember that Jesus' story does not end with his death. Indeed, this week we try to relive, in the liturgy, all the aspects of the betrayal, the passion and death, and the Resurrection of the Lord.

Yesterday our Palm Sunday procession, for twelve consecutive years involving youth from around the Archdiocese, received a new testing. Despite the constant rain they came, nearly a thousand strong, enough to fill this Cathedral church with their persons and their singing and enthusiasm. We had another sampling of the strength of the Church. These young people draw their inspiration from the words and example of Pope John Paul II.

And they have fresh encouragement from Pope Benedict XVI, on whose first encyclical, God is Love, we reflected in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

This is the week when, each day, we have fresh reminders of the pervasive quality of the love of God for us. Today we reflect on his openness to suffering and death in the midst of the seeming triumph of his entry to Jerusalem.

Tomorrow evening, in this Cathedral the holy oils will be blessed. This includes the Chrism to be used at baptisms, confirmations and ordinations during the coming year. We bishops, with the priests, deacons, consecrated religious, catechists and other lay leaders will renew our personal and public commitments to serve God's people. To see and hear each category of those who lead and serve us is a most impressive moment.

On Thursday, we remember the Lord's Last Supper with his Apostles and the great gift he gave us in the Holy Eucharist. There will be adoration of the Blessed

Sacrament following the evening Mass.

On Good Friday, the Lord's Death is recalled at the Service commemorating his death. The reading of the Passion from the Gospel of St. John on this day is a very moving event. If any of you saw the motion picture *The Passion of the Christ* last year, you will have a special understanding of the story of the sufferings of Jesus.

On Saturday, there is the Easter Vigil, recalling the period from Adam to Christ, with readings used historically from the earliest days of the Church. Next Sunday, Easter, we celebrate with all our energy and faith the Resurrection of the Lord.

But please, know that today begins the week of weeks, with every day a special treasure, every day offering fresh possibility for prayer.

Cardinal William H. Keeler