

Homily - Youth and Young Adult Pilgrimage

Today, in our walking, in our friendship, in our prayers and in the celebration of this Eucharist we remember the person who has done more to shape our world during these last two millennia than any other.

Today we gather as disciples of Jesus

to remember the cross,

to remember the resurrection,

to pray in gratitude for the freedom of salvation.

And the word we hear so much on Palm Sunday is this... Hosanna!

There were crowds ahead of Jesus, and crowds behind him shouting, "Hosanna!"

Now, Hosanna is a word we do not use very often these days. We say or sing it in the Holy, Holy, Holy of the Eucharist, but not much otherwise.

It was first a Hebrew term meaning, "Grant your salvation!" or "Save us"

By the time that Jesus makes his triumphal entry into Jerusalem in today's reading, Hosanna was an acclamation...an exultant greeting.

"Hosanna!" The crowd shouted.

And Jesus made his way to Jerusalem.

There are those who surround each one of you today.

People from the media who came to hear your stories.

Friends from your parish or school who are with you today.

Your parents, who may have encouraged you to be here today.

Your youth ministers, campus ministers, religion teachers, principals who invited you here.

Bishop Bennett and our guest musician Danny Langdon who came to spend the day with you.

Priests and deacons and seminarians who have joined in.

It is so popular to follow Jesus today. Jesus made this week's cover of Newsweek Magazine.

Somehow, it is easy to be a Catholic today when the crowd is with you, shouting to you, encouraging you.

Today, you have arrived in triumph, not in Jerusalem, but in Baltimore. And the crowd is with you.

This week is the holiest week of the Church year. That is why I want to be here with you.

And this week, you will learn a lot about crowds.

Sometimes, the crowds were with Jesus...as we heard in the first Gospel today.

And sometimes, they turned on him, or abandoned him.

Jesus was able to survive the ups and downs that came with crowds because he stayed in prayerful contact with his Father. "Your will be done."

Today, the crowd is with you.

But what about tomorrow, or the next day, when they begin to taunt you?

What about when the crowds begin to challenge basic life values?

What about the crowds who claim that a "right to privacy" takes precedence over the most basic of rights, the right to life?

What about the crowds who press for partial birth abortion, virtual infanticide, as a woman's right to choose when our values clearly say, "Choose life?"

Where will you be when the crowds encourage doctors to commit what they call mercy killing, and our values clearly say that these doctors of death are killing mercy?

Where will you be when the crowds that you hang with make remarks that devalue a person, with crude or biting comments?

Where will you be when those around you say that your values are old-fashioned, your morals are hang-ups, your virtue is up for grabs.

Where will you be when our neighbors strike out in violence against those who they will not tolerate?

How many of you might know who James Byrd Jr. is?

He is the 49 year old black man who was dragged to death in Texas because of his race.

You know that those who attack others because of race are closing their eyes to a central truth that you and I believe. No matter what the color of our skin, all are brothers and sisters, because all are children of one heavenly Father, all equally redeemed by the blood of Jesus shed for us upon the cross.

How many