

This is a different year, isn't it.

Ordinarily, we would be gathering

– sometimes indoors and sometimes outdoors

–with palms in our hands and ready for a procession like the parade Jesus made when he entered the holy city Jerusalem.

But instead, we are in our homes,

keeping ourselves and others safe

as we make our resistance against the novel coronavirus.

It is the loving thing to do, as we see the number of cases across PA rise to over 10,000.

We will continue to rigorously wash our hands,

wear masks in public places,

and maintain social distance from others.

We will also even more rigorously continue to pray, worship, and check on our neighbors.

We trust in God to deliver us from this evil as God has delivered humanity from other evils – and especially the evil of death.

Today is Palm Sunday – the Sunday of the Passion

– the beginning of that Holy Week

when we recall the events of Jesus' suffering and death to reconcile all creation –

and his resurrection to redeem us from all evil.

It is important that we observe this Holy Week, for in Jesus, we not only see the past, but also our present and –most significantly – our future.

In Jesus, we are shown our joy,

our suffering,

our death, and our resurrection.

When we forget this story

– when we think the current crisis – whatever it is –

- a broken relationship.
- Loss of job,
- illness,
- or coronavirus

– is all there is –

then we are bound to cower in fear and sink into despair.

Neither of these is the work of the Holy Spirit.

When we remember the story of Jesus – **and that it is also our story** – we can echo the words of St. Paul in Romans 8, *I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.*

Jesus rode into Jerusalem, hailed as King and acclaimed with Hosannas – knowing full well that he would be handed over to suffering and death – **and trusting God his Father to deliver him,**

to glorify him with eternal life.

We know the end of Jesus' story...

That is, we know that his death was not the end.

In fact, we don't know the end of his story, because the story is eternal.

It continues –

- with us who are baptized to be his living body on earth
- with us, who have already died and been raised with him in baptism.
- With us, who have received the Holy Spirit of God for our lives and to bless the lives of others.

So, yes, we ought to be afraid of this virus enough to wash hands, wear masks, and stay home – but not so much that we despair.

Jesus lost everything – and was restored to new life.

Because of him, we may dare to hope for our restoration.

So let us hear the story of our salvation

- as the story of faith that endures suffering,
- sacrifice that expresses love, and
- hope that is not disappointed.

Let us hear and remember the story of Jesus.

Amen.