

Today (This evening) we celebrate Palm Sunday - this is the beginning of Holy Week, the most holy time of the year
The Church, in the Roman Missal, instructs the priest to give a brief homily - so I'll try and keep this brief - I'll try and keep it under a half hour

There are so many things one could talk about with the readings today - we are in the final week - this is where, in salvation history, things go from good to worst case scenario - we have Jesus riding into the Jerusalem on a donkey being treated like a king - and then less than a week later, they are asking for His crucifixion

But I want to talk about the theme of obedience - obedience is almost a negative word in our culture - we are raised to think that the goal of life is to be able to take care of yourself - to provide for yourself - to be able to forge your own path, your own destiny, to make your own history

In the first reading, Isaiah says that he has not rebelled against God despite the fact that God is asking him to preach to people who do not want to hear the message he has from God - he says he has not turned his back on what the Lord has asked of him - he has done this despite the fact that they beat him, plucked his beard, and spat in his face
Isaiah has been able to do this because he knows that God is his help - that in doing the will of God, he will not be disgraced

This passage has obviously been applied to Jesus and His passion - that is why we have this as our first reading on Palm Sunday

In the Second reading from St. Paul's letter to the Philippians, we have the passage about Jesus - that even though Jesus is God, is equal to God the Father, He humbled Himself and became one of us - He was obedient to God the Father to the point of death, death on the Cross

Jesus holds out obedience as the path to freedom - what do I mean? - Jesus wasn't free as He was arrested and nailed to a Cross, was He? - but He was free - He was free to do the will of God the Father

Obedience is freedom - as I have said before, think of a basketball team - the players are restricted in their movement on the floor by the play the coach has drawn up and they have practiced over and over again - however, it is in this restriction of movement that they become free to play their best - they are free to have the best opportunity to score and to eventually win the game - obedience is freedom

This is what Jesus did in the Gospel during His passion - He was radically obedient to God the Father - He radically abandoned His will to the will of the Father - Jesus had a divine will and a human will - however, the human will was and is always submissive to the divine will

Jesus, in being radically obedient to the God the Father, was able to fulfill the purpose of His coming to earth - He was free to be who He was and is - He was free to save us from our sins on the Cross

Father Cizek was a prisoner in the Soviet Union from 1939 to 1963 - Father Cizek talks about radical abandonment to the will of God - even as he was solitary confinement for years and unable to act as a priest to the people of the

Soviet Union, he was able to keep going because he knew this was God's will for him at the time - the same was true when he was in the labor camps

Obedience is freedom

So often we try to take over our own lives - to be the one who can shape and change our history and destiny - to make ourselves happy - we think that at some point we can go at it alone, that at some point obedience becomes obsolete - and it is true, sometimes we need to buck the way things have been done in the past in order to help society, help others move from a bad way for doing something to a better way of doing something

So if we think obedience is just blindly doing whatever those in authority ask us to do no matter what impact it has on us, then obedience becomes a bad thing

But that's not the obedience the Lord is asking of us - He is asking us to obey, to listen to His example, and realize that the greatest things in history do not come from seizing power or taking care of ourselves, but from handing everything over to God, from handing our lives over to God, by placing our lives in the Lord's hands - in this way, we live free from the powers of the world, and instead are caught up in the power of God that truly moves history and truly makes us joyful - because at the end of the day, we either believe in our own power, or we believe in God

Obedience is freedom - obedience to God is true freedom