

Sisters and brothers, the murder of men, women and dozens of children and infants with chemical weapons by the Syrian government in the ongoing civil war there, has shocked a world that in many ways has become almost accustomed and numb to ongoing bloodshed and horrific violence. This horrible action exposes the depths of evil of which human beings are capable — especially when intoxicated with power and the fear of losing that power.

This weekend we join with Christians throughout our world in reflecting on the suffering, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ — a week that we call holy... .

I invite us to reflect on two questions as we journey through this holiest of weeks in our Liturgical year:

Do the events of Holy Week – the Passion, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ 2000 years ago, shed any light first, on what is going on our hearts and, second, on what is going on in our world in the Spring of 2017?

First, in our hearts: What ails us? What isn't right? What are we holding on to that we need to let go in order to experience new life? Resurrection? Wholeness? “Unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it accomplishes nothing...; but if it dies – it will produce much fruit.”

Secondly: Does the passion, death and Resurrection 2000 years ago, shed any light on the pain and brokenness and bloodshed of our world in the Spring 2017?

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Yes, the path we see in Jesus' dying and rising *is* the powerful path of personal transformation.

Unfortunately, personal transformation is as far as many Christians ever go with the events of Holy Week. But when *only* the *personal* meaning of Holy Week is emphasized, we betray the passion for which Jesus was willing to risk his life.

Jesus' passion the birthing of the reign of God — what Jesus was *passionate about*, led to his passion, ... his execution. His passion for what life would be like on earth if God were 'King' and the rulers and dominations, scepters and Empires of the world were not... The world of which the prophets dreamed: a world of justice, in which everybody has enough, and systems are fair and weapons are melted into plowshares and violence is no more!

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Brothers and sisters, this is not simply a political dream; *it is God's dream*, a dream that can only be realized when we are grounded more deeply in the reality of God – who's heart is justice.

This is Holy Week in a nut shell: Jesus' passion for the world got him killed by the rulers of the world. But God vindicated Jesus and the Kingdom of God – like a tiny mustard seed – began to sprout. This is the global meaning of Good Friday and Easter.

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Two processions entered Jerusalem on that spring day in the year 30. It was the beginning of the week of Passover – the most sacred week of the Jewish year. In the centuries since, up to today, Christians have celebrated this day as 'Palm Sunday,' ... 'Passion Sunday': the first day of Holy Week – the most sacred week of the Christian year.

On that day, one procession was a peasant procession... a peoples' march; the other an Imperial procession... demonstrating martial strength...

From the East, Jesus rode on a donkey, down the from the Mount of Olives, cheered by his followers who laid Palm branches in front of him as a carpet: here were the poor, the widows, the lepers, the tax collectors, the prostitutes, the foreigners, the women, the children... . Today's procession would include those innocent civilians murdered in Syria, those without health insurance, immigrants – documented and undocumented; refugees fleeing from the horrors of war, those oppressed by the evils of racism, sexism, homophobia; victims of sex trafficking... and the list goes on. *All those on fire for a new world* ... an alternative vision ... the Kingdom of God! God's dream... like a germinating mustard seed!

From the West, comes Pilate's procession: the Imperial procession encompassing and showcasing the power, and glory... and violence of the Empire that ruled the world: cavalry on horses, foot soldiers with leather armor, helmets, weapons and the beating of drums. Today... drones, and ballistic missiles; chemical and nuclear weapons...

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Sisters and brothers, in 2017 – like 30AD – for we who call ourselves Christian, Holy Week is about an *alternative* procession, ... an alternative journey: an anti-Imperial, nonviolent procession, entrenched in the justice and love of God for all persons; an alternative journey of letting go which leads to personal transformation; an alternative journey joining with other people of good will – the CNY Solidarity Coalition, the Peace Movement, the Sanctuary Movement – in birthing the dream of God on earth as in heaven!

The question for Palm Sunday..., the question for Holy Week..., the question of our lives is:

Which journey are we on?

Which procession are we in?

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Brothers and sisters, let us take our Palm branches – like a Creed – and journey together through Holy Week and beyond to create the dream of God. Let us pray for the grace – for the courage – to walk in the alternative procession **of the Prince of Peace!**

Amen!