

Palm Sunday always starts out so festive! The Apostles are taking it all in and probably loving it! They are like rock stars! Fun to be a follower of Jesus when the world is all good, when we are all good and making it.

It is almost like comic relief, like a movie you just know is going to take a turn...

Then, when everything starts to go south, cracks appear and then the flood gates are opened.

Perhaps some here have experienced this: All is well, then you lose your job or someone you love so deeply passes or leaves you. You may have been diagnosed with horrible prognosis. Maybe you are failing out in college. What do you do with your faith then?

Today's reading from Mark portrays a Christ who is abandoned by his followers, his friends, seemingly forsaken by God, and even tempted to despair.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, they can't stay awake. When he is arrested, one resorts to violence, something he abhorred. At his arrest, at the trial, and at the crucifixion, they all disappear. (Peter at a distance...)

*The most notable of these is the young man who follows Christ to the scene of his arrest wearing only a linen cloth. When the guards seize him, he leaves the cloth behind and flees naked.

There is much speculation about the meaning of this. Some say the young man was Mark himself. Still others say he symbolizes all those who abandon Christ by denying their faith, leaving their baptismal garment behind.

Mind you, today we understand the Body of Christ to be His Church. How many who have abandoned him for things of this world, indifferent to the needs of his people? They are represented in the gospel.

But there are those we know that will never leave us nor the Church, no matter what may have happened in their lives, no matter how hurtful - they will always stay. They experience great tragedy but will never forsake the Church.

They are represented by the women disciples and the Beloved Apostle, who remain, loving him to the end.

Finally, there is Simon, who is drafted to carry the cross of Jesus. This stranger has become the first person to literally do what Jesus had said some time earlier: "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." (Mark 8: 34)

By doing this Simon has become a privileged partner of the supreme act of the Son of God giving his life for all without distinction. His name would soon become a synonym of all who help others in need.

Thus, he became the symbol of all the simple and anonymous people throughout the world who are present by the side of those who suffer, those who have heavy crosses to carry, and they do this quietly and without fanfare.

These are our fathers, mothers, relatives, friends and sometimes people unknown to us who rally around us with their sympathy and are by our side to help us.

In my homily, I just mentioned a few characters which might represent us. There are others, of course. Perhaps through our lifetime, we may trade one for another. Our one hope? That when our time comes, we die loving him.