

**The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word.
Morning by morning he wakens-- wakens my ear to
listen as those who are taught. The Lord GOD has
opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn
backward.**

**Purify my lips, and my heart oh God that I may
Worthily proclaim your Holy Gospel. Amen.**

**Palm Sunday, Passion Sunday. If someone asked you,
“what is your passion,” what would you tell them? Is it
football? Basketball? Soccer? Fishing? Hunting? Jesus
displayed great passion for his mission of salvation and
reconciliation, but only a very brief period of his life is**

called his passion. All year we have been reading and listening to Christ's Ministry. His teachings, healing, raising the dead, His birth. And all the other miracles that he performed, during his 3-year, 4- month Ministry.

Today we turn our attention to *The Passion*, the Reason we are here, the reason we are Christians. It feels like we just celebrated his birth, because we did! And now just 3-months later we have the Passion. We'll be hearing about his ministry all summer. It seems it should be the other way around, his Birth, his Ministry, And then the Passion. But the passion deserves urgent attention.

When we prepare for a Sermon, it takes a whole week to get to the final draft. We read the text, research all available resources, we read the text, look for a hook, or a story that fits the Scripture. Did I mention that we read the text? But sometimes, sometimes, as with today's readings, the scripture can speak for itself. The scripture is the story. Some of us have heard this story 70 or 80 times. Depending on how old we are. Some of us can tell the story from memory. Why is this story so important? Every one of us can connect with this story. I have a passion for healing. Many of you know that I spent decades working in the medical field as a Corpsman, and a paramedic healing. I recall one night that we were taking an elderly man to the hospital at

like 2 in the morning. (We called that OH GOD oh clock) He was a quadruple amputee, heart failure, and other issues. As we were riding down the road, he suddenly turned to me and said,

“it’s a beautiful place, looked out the back window and said its time to go,” and died. I have a witness that says

heaven is a beautiful place, and now I offer spiritual healing, I’ve seen a lot of pain and death, too much, I think. But Romans!

The Romans were masters of torture and pain, they had it down to a fine science. Have you ever wondered why they flog Jesus 39 times? Why not 40, or 20? They knew that no one could survive 40 lashes, 39 was just

enough to keep them alive, but on the edge of death.

And Crucifixion was the Romans' most agonizing form of execution a person could endure.

We don't have to use so much imagination to picture the scene. How many have seen the movie The Passion of the Christ? I dare say that's the first time that directors got it right, except for one thing. the nailing of Jesus's feet. The Romans did not put the nails through the top of the feet; they placed the feet on the sides of the cross and drove the nails through the heels of the feet.

Archologist have found remains with nails driven through the heals. To breathe you would have to stand up using your feet, if only for a few seconds, in doing so it would cause great pain, and agony. The same can be

said with the nailing of the hands. The nails were not driven through the palm of the hand, but through the wrist. In the chapel at St. Johns there is a crucified Christ hanging over the alter, showing the nails driven through the wrist. In Roman times the wrist was considered part of the hand, that's why you see in films of Roman times men grabbing another's wrist to shake hands. Putting a nail through the palm of the hand would not support the weight of the body. Putting it through the wrist would, however, The Romans thought of everything.

Crucifixion is death by suffocation, it is meant to be as slow and painful as possible. With all the trauma from the lashing, dehydration from blood loss, and not

drinking, Jesus was in a severely weakened state. His body was shutting down, he was dying, he was experiencing for perhaps the first time in his human life what true mortal pain and suffering was.

So why is it called *the Passion*. The word Passion is from the Latin Patior, Passio (to suffer, bear, endure). A willingness to suffer for what you love. Passion is the inner spark provided by God's Holy Spirit that ignites you to your God given purpose. Passion has to do with our heart, the internal fire that motivates us and energizes us, it is the most profound love. The feeling that nothing else exists. The central theme is the belief that the Son of God for our salvation suffered and was

crucified, died and was buried, and rose from the dead, is the unfailing, everlasting love of the Almighty Triune God, miraculously confined in a human body, suffering of His own volition for his beloved creation. Yes, His creation, for St. John teaches us, “In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”

St. Augustine tells us: When day was fading into evening, the Lord laid down his life on the cross, to take it up again; he did not lose his life against his will. Here, too, we are symbolized. What part of him hung on the cross if not the part he had received from us? Think about that, **what part of him hung on the cross if not the part he had received from us?**

How could God the Father ever cast off and abandon his only Son, who is indeed one God with him? Yet Christ, nailing our weakness to the cross (where, as the Apostle says: Our old nature was nailed to the cross with him), cried out with the very voice of humanity: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* (Mark 15:34).

Today is the day to start a new chapter in our lives, to gain a deeper understanding of God's love for us. To ask him what he wants us to do for him and his Ministry. When you Pray ask God what it is he wants you to do for him. I did that and look at where I ended up. So be careful what you ask for. Prayer is a

fragrance rising like incense. I will refer to St.

Augustine again:

The evening sacrifice is then the passion of the Lord, the cross of the Lord, the oblation of the victim that brings salvation, the holocaust acceptable to God. In his resurrection he made this evening sacrifice a morning sacrifice. Prayer offered in holiness from a faithful heart rises like incense from a holy altar.

Nothing is more fragrant than the fragrance of the Lord.

May all who believe share in this fragrance. Therefore, our old nature, in the words of the Apostle, was nailed to the cross with him, in order, as he says, to destroy

our sinful body, so that we may be slaves to sin no longer.

He died for us. What may not the hearts of believers promise themselves as the gift of God's grace, when for their sake God's only Son, coeternal with the Father, was not content only to be born as a man from human stock but even died at the hands of the men he had created. The passion, God's passion for us removes our sins and grants us salvation by God's grace. How strong is our passion for God, how much do you love the Lord.

This is the day to start a new chapter in your life. Ask God what he wants you to do. Then, listen, listen,

listen, listen, and love, love, love. Love your God with all your heart, your mind, your soul. Love your neighbor as yourself, God didn't say you have to like them, but you must love them. And some people are harder to love than others.

But as for me, I have trusted in you, O LORD. *

I have said, "You are my God.

Make your face to shine upon your servant, *

and in your loving-kindness save me."

Have you trusted in the Lord? Have you said Lord you are my God? We are God's servants, when we

**serve Him faithfully His face will shine upon us and
His loving kindness will save us.**

*Bow down before the Lord and be still,
and listen, to the word of God.*

*Christ is both the Priest, Offering himself,
and himself the victim,*

**He willed that the Sacramental sign, of this should be
the daily sacrifice of the church, who, since the church
is the body, and he the head, learns to offer herself
through Him. AMEN.**