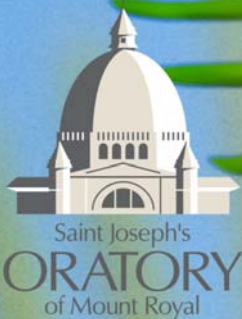


Palm Sunday, April 5, 2020

Homily of Father Jean-Pierre Aumont, CSC



With the proclamation of the Passion, we enter into holy week, a week charged with the presence of God. Brother André used to say, “The love that our Lord had during his Passion brings to light the love God has for us.”

Celebrating the Sunday of the Passion of our Lord reminds us of Saint Brother André’s devotion to Jesus’ Passion. We know that because of his frail health, he was sickly his whole life. Yet, he was able to unite his suffering with the Passion of Jesus. Brother André received the suffering of all those who came to seek him out and he gave them a bit of strength, of comfort and healing. Brother André not only identified with the sufferings of pilgrims, but he offered up his own suffering to the Lord on their behalf. Brother André helps us to understand the meaning of the Passion of Jesus which will unfold this week.

No one can avoid suffering. It is too much with us all our lives to even try to forget, especially during this pandemic of the coronavirus. Every day the media remind us: a virus is at the gates. Often we ask ourselves, why all this suffering?

Now, there is hardship that happens to us which we are prepared to disregard — the pain of giving birth, or the dint of hard work, for example, because we know that this labor will bear fruit, that it will result in something good we can be proud of. What we refuse to disregard is the horror of war, the anguish of loneliness, suffering without treatment. In fact, suffering

that we cannot look away from is the unceasing suffering of Holy Week, or a Good Friday without Easter Sunday. Such suffering is unbearable because it is without hope.

On this Palm Sunday, Jesus was welcomed with honor and acclamation because the people had hope in him. Five days later when he was nailed to the cross, many lost hope because they could not understand what Jesus was offering to them, that is, another kind of Life. They were expecting one thing and he offered them something else. A bit like certain visitors who came to see Brother André that he might cure their body and who frequently left with something altogether different, that is, a plentiful life in their heart.

What he offered those who showed him their suffering, was a glint of Easter, a promise which gave meaning to their life while they had to brave Good Friday. Those, who were able to scrape up some sliver of hope for their life, set off with abounding life.

If the hope of Easter during Holy Week animates us, then Good Friday will give meaning to our suffering and to our greatest hardships: we can trust that the suffering which touches us will never have the last word in our life. When one truly believes in the source of life which springs forth from Easter, one can see, in the Passion of Jesus, a sign of love — the love of one who suffered in giving his life for those whom he loved.

Brother André used to say, “God the Father sent his Son to earth out of love for us, and we should return him love for love.” All during this week, with our shortcomings and our expectations, we follow Jesus on the road which leads to Jerusalem. During his Passion, Jesus did what he always did: he comforted his disciples, he consoled the women of Jerusalem, he pardoned his torturers as well as the criminals on their cross with him, and he died placing himself in his Father’s hands. Like Brother André did, let us set ourselves to walking in the footsteps of Christ. Let us live in the faith and confidence that whatever happens, the Father loves us, and (as Brother André would say) never leaves anybody by the side of the road. Through his Son, Christ Jesus, the Father gives us Life. The Christ triumphed over death that we might live forever with him.

“In loving our brothers,” says Saint John, “we know that we have passed from death to life,” because love begets life. Jesus proved this for us by rising on Easter morning. Brother André had a keen experience of this force of life within himself: he was 91 when he died. He dedicated his life in service to others. For him, life was but a passage to another life. “When I die,” he said toward the end of his days, “I will be near God and I will be able to help you even more.”

To love the other, to accept them with respect is a path to resurrection. We are currently witnessing extraordinary gestures of solidarity and mutual aid in Quebec and across the country in fighting the coronavirus and coming to the aid of the most vulnerable. There are many initiatives of generosity which amount to paths toward resurrection, paths toward hope. For this, we must give thanks.

This week in following the example of Saint Brother André, let us pray that our affliction and that of the world in which we live might be caressed by the love and hope of Easter.

May Saint Joseph and Saint Brother André guide us and keep us optimistic during this adversity. As Brother André used to say we know that God loves us and never abandons any one. May the love of the Father take root within us.

Jean-Pierre Aumont, CSC