

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on Palm Sunday
April 5, 2020
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Palm Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week. It is called *Holy* or *The Great Week* because in it we rehearse, relearn, and *participate in* the great saving events of our salvation.

In the *Prologue* of the Fourth Gospel it is declared of the Son of God that “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” (*John 1:11*) The Son of the Eternal Father desired to experience everything we do except sin. Holy Week shows us His experience of the *consequences* of our sin. And part of the consequences was a feeling of being abandoned. When Our Lord Jesus cried from the Cross: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (*Matthew 27:46*) this was a revelation of the relentless Divine love in pursuit of you and me. Easter morning has the final word about that. But from the Cross Christ went to the lowest depths to which man ever comes, and in that place He laid Himself as the foundation by which we pass over to the Life He intended for us to have at creation.

In Holy Week many people worldwide have at least some renewed sense of the transaction offered by Christ on the Cross. Millions of people are experiencing the consequences of pandemic. There is fear, anxiety, helplessness, and the sense of being abandoned and forsaken. Christ went to the bottom of sorrow, shame, and loss, and joined us in the circumstances of the mess we make, or the mess inflicted upon us by disease and pestilence. In that place He made it possible for us to pass over to life through Him. From the Cross Our Blessed Lord may have lost the life-long connection He had with His Own Divine destiny. And He joined us in that, for *we too can forget our destiny*. Facing at this moment the possibility of a shortened physical life, many people are rethinking about the true meaning of life and about eternal life.

Ever since Good Friday our prayers to Almighty God are different. At the end of our petitions, intercessions, praises, and thanksgivings, we add something. We say, “though Jesus Christ our Lord.” (The *Our Father* does not end this way. That is because the Lord’s Prayer was given us *before* Good Friday.) On the night before Calvary, Jesus had said, “Hitherto have ye asked nothing *in My Name*.” (*John 16:24*) and “Whatsoever ye shall ask *in My Name*, that I Will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” (*John 14:13*) Good Friday is the game changer. Ever since

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Good Friday we do that. Every prayer we make is prayed through “Jesus Christ our Lord” i.e. through the *Passion of Christ*. Our absolute claim on the Heart of our Heavenly Father is that we plead the sacrifice of His dear Son. The very Name JESUS means “He Who saves.” (*Matthew 1:21*) Jesus’ death is our way to God. It is the way we pass over from sin and death to life. That is why we call the day Christ died *Good Friday*.