

Share the Journey

Homily for Palm Sunday 2018 Youth Retreat

Peace be with you! “Share the Journey.” That’s the clarion call Pope Francis initiated this last September when I was in Rome for the ordination of two of our young men to the diaconate: Jesús Mariscal from Kennewick and César Izquierdo from Sunnyside.

This “Share the Journey” campaign was launched on the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul – one of the Church’s great saints known for his outreach to the poor and needy. The launch date was deliberate because in his Wednesday talk, Pope Francis challenged us to “Share the Journey” with some of the poorest among us: the global wave of refugees fleeing war-torn countries of the Middle East. Yet he also noted that this call to “Share the Journey” was one that applied to migrant workers and immigrants around the world. The Spanish translation of his Wednesday talk even used the word “campesino” – a direct reference to our own situation here in the United States and – indeed – here in the Yakima Valley with our ongoing migration of agricultural workers who help put food on America’s tables.

This was all especially poignant and moving precisely because César Izquierdo had self-deported nearly ten years ago during his studies as a seminarian for the Diocese of Yakima so that he could return at the end of the ban and serve us here in Central Washington. Two of his cousins already work for us at Catholic Charities Housing Services here in the Yakima Valley. So hearing the Holy Father’s words was particularly heartening, given our situation here in the Diocese of Yakima.

But perhaps what was most stunning and most heartening was the invitation from Archbishop Jorge Carlos Patrón Wong. Archbishop Wong served as bishop in a diocese in Yucatan, Mexico. He’s Mexican with Chinese ancestry. He serves the head of the Vatican’s office in charge of oversight for all the seminaries in the world. He invited the two seminarians over along with the families. He thanked all of us for the “Culture of Encounter” evident in the formation of priests in the Diocese of Yakima. I stressed to him the importance of honoring every vocational stirring regardless of the legal status of the young person – the importance that we “Share the Journey” with every young person regardless of their personal circumstance.

Thus we touch on the heart of this closing Mass today. I am so grateful to so many of you parents who year after year organize this Jornada Pascual each Palm Sunday weekend. The journey of Jesus on Palm Sunday marks his return journey to Jerusalem. But even more it marks the journey to his death on Calvary. It marks his journey of salvation for us.

What does this journey of salvation mean? Spiritual writer Gil Baile in his famous book “Violence Unveiled” suggests that Jesus dies in a bloody big screen movie production so we don’t have to live in one. All of the violence, all of sin, all of the world’s destruction, all of the world’s dysfunction lands upon Jesus while on the cross. Dying on a cross, Jesus takes his full

humanity and his full divinity to the deepest, darkest and farthest reaches of suffering. On the cross we see that there is not one inch of the world excluded from the light of God's love. Jesus bears God's love to the most painful, tortuous and brutalized edges of human existence.

The problem is not that the death of Jesus on the cross was not efficacious. The problem is that we act like it never happened. We continue our gang banging and our violence. We continue our gossip and our chismes. We continue to turn away from the love shared with us by turning towards the darker forces of competitiveness and rivalry, jealousy and fear. We act like the death of Jesus never happened for us. We act as though God were absent from the darker corners of our thoughts and minds. We pretend as though God was absent and blind from the war and conflict of the narcotraficantes, the drug dealers, the gang leaders, the principalities and powers of this world.

Yet our time on this Jornada Vocacional on this Palm Sunday weekend means we "Share the Journey." We share the journey with Jesus because it is Jesus who can show us the way through the darkness of sin and death. We share the journey with youth all around the world, for this Palm Sunday and every Palm Sunday is always World Youth Day. The wooden cross that travels from one World Youth Day to the next and will be at the next World Youth Day this coming January in Panama is the same cross used on Palm Sunday in Rome. It's like the Olympic torch that moves from one Olympic game to the next.

We share the journey because without Jesus we are lost. Without Jesus we cannot see God's face. Without Jesus, suffering and sin make no sense and have no purpose. Without Jesus we lack direction. As we enter Holy Week, may we share the journey with Jesus so we can become better companions for each other on our own journey of faith. "Share the Journey!" Peace be with you.