

Palm Sunday “Roadmaps, Itineraries, and Grace”

Fr. Frank Schuster

Every morning I like to look over my calendar for the day with a cup of coffee and offer what I plan on doing that day to God’s care. I like to tell God what I will be doing and asking for his grace and blessing. Every evening, I enjoy reflecting on what I did during the day. And I am usually entertained by how different the day ended up being like from what I thought the day was going to be like. That is the nature of being a priest. We can never predict who God is going to place in our path and every experience that will transpire. And yet, I think we all have this same experience if we were to reflect on our days in this way. We like telling God in the morning what our plans are and God lets us know by the evening what his plans were. Perhaps try this next week as part of your prayer in the morning and the evening. I find this to be a great way to reflect on God’s presence in our lives.

Of course, we all love making roadmaps of our lives for God, especially when we are young. We like telling God what we will be doing five years, ten years from now. And somehow God finds a way to tell us what we will be doing, like a young person who goes to a social event on whim, meets her future spouse, and they spend fifty years of marriage together, and that might not have necessarily been their plan at the time. However, their kids and grandkids are most grateful, follow? This is how God operates. I think God is quite entertained when we present to him our road maps. And when life happens, we can scratch our heads in wonder.

I mention this because, from the perspective of the disciples of Jesus, what happened after Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem was not on any of their itineraries. We begin Holy Week waving palms celebrating Jesus as the new King David. By the end of the week we trade our palms for clenched fists calling for Jesus’ execution. From the disciples’ perspective, this was not the plan. And yet, Jesus’ passion, death and resurrection was the best possible outcome. Without the events of Holy Week, we would not be saved. Clearly, God’s plan is better.

My friends, we all love spending time thinking about our roadmaps, where we would like our life to be at any given time. We make plans based on our expectations for the future. As we all know, there comes a point in life when there is no room at the inn and our plans must change. Instead of seeing these moments as disasters, we can instead embrace them as opportunities. Sometimes the best moments in life are the unscripted ones. Sometimes we have to empty our cup before God can fill it. Sometimes, God’s plan is better even if we can’t see it at the present moment.

And so, in that spirit, this Palm Sunday I invite you all to drop every plan you can afford to this week so to make this Holy Week a retreat experience for you and your family. Spend time in prayer. Read sacred scripture and consider joining us for the sacred Triduum. The Triduum is one liturgy spread over three nights, Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Vigil. Relive the sacred drama of our salvation with Jesus and his disciples this week. As we bring our spiritual itineraries and roadmaps with us to prayer each morning, something interesting might happen by the end of this week. God might share his roadmap for us and we will be surprised by Easter hope.