

“You Are There” - Jesus

This week we celebrate Holy Week, a sacred time in which we call to mind the Passion and Death of our Savior Jesus Christ. On Palm Sunday and again on Good Friday, we read the gospel stories of our Lord's suffering and crucifixion. Perhaps when we listen to these stories we think, “Well it's history and all of this happened a very long time ago.” We might even feel that the Passion, while an interesting narrative, has no real connection to our lives in the year 2016. And of course, that's not true. There are lessons to be learned from prayerfully reflecting upon the suffering and death of Christ. Many years ago, there was an interesting radio show. The show was called “You Are There.” The writers of that show would present historical events and the narrators would bring the listeners “Back into time” so that they could actually almost experience the great event that was happening, whether it was the assassination of Abraham Lincoln or the bombing of Pearl Harbor. This program really made you feel like you were an eyewitness to history and really “there.” I wonder if we could not apply something of the same idea to the special events that we are commemorating in Church this week? A great saint by the name of Ignatius Loyola urged people to use their imagination when meditating upon the scenes of the gospel. For instance, St. Ignatius would have devout souls try to view the scenes from the gospel as a living picture - to be there ourselves, to hear the words of Jesus spoken by our own ears, to see his actions with our own eyes, to be actually present and incorporate ourselves within the story. It is an excellent spiritual method that can make the gospel more alive. We should feel compassion for the sufferings of Jesus. And when we feel sympathy for the Lord, then we will be able to much better bear the crosses, problems, trials and disappointments that come our way in this life. As the Epistle to the Hebrew tells us, “For we do not have a priest unable to sympathize with our weakness but one who was tempted in every way that we are and yet never sinned.” So as Holy Week begins, let us “Be there with Christ” and try to understand the great love He has for us in giving His life on the cross. The saints understand that love because they meditated often on the Passion and it was as real to them as if it was a current event. No, we are not saints, but we can still profit from giving a little more time and attention to things religious. St. Bernard wrote: “There is nothing more effective for curing the wounds of our conscience and purifying our souls, than to continually meditate on the sufferings of Christ. Let us take the advice of the saints and grow in the knowledge of God. May this Holy Week be a time of real spiritual growth, fervor and devotion as we are “really there” with Jesus! God bless you ...

Sincerely,

Fr. Jerome