

"Returning to Our Roots: A Holy Week of Renewal"

March 24, 2024 – Palm Sunday

Introduction: The Journey Begins

- Start by setting the stage for Holy Week as a time of introspection, repentance, and renewal.
- Briefly recap the series' intent, emphasizing the journey towards an authentic practice of faith, grounded in the teachings and love of Jesus.
- Touch briefly upon last week (Confusing)

I. Personal Story

- a. Kairos preparation, not really paying attention, believing I had one more week until Palm Sunday.
- b. I let my secular life disrupt my spiritual duties.
- c. This has not only happened to me, it's happened on MULTIPLE occasions within the bounds of the church.

I. Historical Context: The Church's Growth and Drift

- **Early Christian Community (1st Century):** Highlight the early Christians' communal life, characterized by simplicity, shared resources, and a direct, personal relationship with Jesus, as depicted in Acts 2:42-47.
- **Constantine and the Milvian Bridge (312 AD):** Explain how Constantine's conversion and the Edict of Milan marked Christianity's transition from a persecuted minority to a state-endorsed religion. This brought wealth, power, and a shift towards a more hierarchical and institutionalized Church.
- **The Monastic Response (4th-5th Centuries):** Introduce figures like Antony the Great (c. 251–356 AD), who sought solitude in the desert to live a life of prayer and asceticism, emphasizing a personal relationship with God amidst growing secular influences in the Church.
 - **Quote from Anthony** - "I saw the snares that the enemy spreads out over the world and I said groaning, 'What can get through from such snares?' Then I heard a voice saying to me, 'Humility.'"
- **St. Benedict of Nursia (c. 480 – 547 AD):** Mention Benedict's establishment of a monastic rule that balanced communal life with personal spiritual discipline, aiming to recapture the early Church's spirit. This represented a structured approach to resisting the secularization of Christian life and faith.
 - "Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ, and may He bring us all together to everlasting life."

II. The Contemporary Drift: Our Secular Lives

- **Personal Reflection:** Share a personal story or reflection on how easy it is to prioritize worldly concerns over spiritual growth and the relationship with Jesus.
 - Reflect a bit on just how easy it is to get drawn into things and pursuits that don't really matter.
- **Church Today:** Draw parallels between the historical drift of the Church away from its roots and the modern congregation's challenges in navigating secular distractions.
 - The Church today is engaged in a host of pursuits
 - Our own denomination has chosen to fight for things while leaving behind it's job of spiritual training.
 - TELL THE BOB JACK STORY HERE
 - "I'd send them to the Baptist church."

II. Holy Week: An Opportunity for Renewal

- a. THIS IS OUR CHANCE TO MAKE A WONDERFUL DO OVER.

- **The Meaning of Holy Week:** Emphasize Holy Week as a time to reflect on Jesus' journey to the cross, His sacrifice, and His example of humility and service.
- **Monastic Wisdom for Today:** Suggest that the congregation consider Holy Week as a "monastic retreat" in the midst of their lives, dedicating time to prayer, reflection, and reorienting their lives towards Jesus.

IV. Application: Living in "DO OVER" Mode

- **Surrender of Sin:** Encourage congregants to practice confession and repentance, letting go of those things that separate them from God.
- I really want to linger here.

Conclusion: The Path Forward

- Close by reminding the congregation that Holy Week offers a unique time to reset and redirect our lives towards Christ.
- Offer hope and encouragement that, through the disciplines of prayer, fasting, service, and community, we can all experience a "do over" in our spiritual lives, coming closer to the heart of our faith.