

A Litany for Holy Week: Troubling Days in Jerusalem

By Rev. Diane Dulin, written for Holy Week 2014

When Jesus entered Jerusalem for the last time, he arrived as a poor Palestinian worker. He understood that his message and actions threatened the powerful Empire then in control of his country and his people. Contemporary Palestinians face a similar situation. Their physical movement is circumscribed and controlled. They are not granted human rights. They are kept away from holy sites and harassed in their worship. Equal protection under the law is a distant dream. The children are not safe and the future is threatened.

Enter Jerusalem through this litany; allow the voices of Palestine to echo in your worship and in your prayers this Holy Week.

Leader: Jesus entered Jerusalem with the humility of a poor peasant, rather than trappings of empirical power. He was mobbed by crowds of the common people, not protected by the soldiers of Rome.

People: If the people of Palestine cry out today for the Savior, will they be stormed by troops, tear-gassed by soldiers, sprayed with putrid liquid or beaten by settlers?

Leader: When the crowds were ordered to silence in the presence of Jesus, a famous promise was made:

People: Jesus said, "If these are silent, the very stones will cry out."

Leader: When Jesus confronted the corruption to which the sacrificial system had fallen, he turned over the tables of moneychangers. No more could they charge with impunity those who came from many regions to honor their faith.

People: Our hearts and minds have been turned upside down, just as tables were overturned so long ago. We have seen the suffering, violence and injustice that Palestinians experience as they live in Israel, Jerusalem, Gaza, the West Bank and refugee camps within and beyond the land of their birth.

Leader: All those who came to Jesus with human or spiritual needs were touched, taught, healed and renewed.

People: We, too, seek renewal, healing, insight and steadfast faith. We need these gifts to sustain our efforts on behalf of the people of Palestine.

Leader: The meal in an Upper Room brought shared food illuminated by candlelight; soul-searching among those who called themselves disciples; warnings, commandments and promises from Jesus as he contemplated what was coming.

People: He even washed their feet.

Leader: In Gethsemane he asked for friendship, prayer, companionship and help.

People: Yet these were forgotten when fatigue, fear and confusion set in among his followers.

Leader: We pause tonight to seek a deeper constancy, a seasoned loyalty, a dedicated offering of our energies and efforts.

People: We mourn the deaths of all those who die at the hands of the State.

Leader: May the days of this Holy Week bring us close to the heart of God's compassion. May our worship enliven the spirit of courage that keeps us strong for the work to which we are called. Thanks be to God. Amen.

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