

What is it about this narrative, this re-telling of this event, the Passion and Death of Jesus? How many times have we heard it, read it, seen it portrayed in movies and art and music?

With most things, there is a danger that familiarity can cause us to turn our heads, close our eyes and our ears so that we do not have to endure something again that no longer holds our interest.

But not this, not today.

Certainly there are some who came in today with disinterest, or at least with a hundred things jumbling in their minds. Then, remembering that we are going to be standing for a long while, felt some anxiety or allowed some distraction.

From the very beginning, when a close friend of Jesus is willing to betray Our Lord for a price, we are pulled in.

We are drawn into the intimacy of the upper room, that last supper, the first Eucharist, and we imagine ourselves there. We go to the Garden. We sleep, we stay awake, we fight, we scatter.

The trials, the condemnation, the beatings, the road to Calvary, the crucifixion, the death and burial - we all imagine ourselves present.

What compels us to enter in? Why is it that the retelling of the Passion cannot be heard passively?

In these Palm Sunday readings, we see ourselves, the good and the ugly of our actions, our attitudes. We hold up our palms and sing Hosanna, and we set them aside by the time we say in unison, 'Crucify Him'!

Yes. This...is...our...story. A very familiar and human account of ourselves.

Yet, it is more. It is the story of love, a love like no other.

*Jesus, the one called Christ*, as Pilate says of Him, is not part human and part God. He is fully God and fully human. God enters completely into humanity, as St. Paul reminds us.

It is neither God nor man that is crucified and dies and is buried. It is the God-Man.

It is the love of God AND the love of a man that takes Him to the cross. This bears repeating.

His Passion, His willing and complete surrender is the love of God AND a man.

That God loves us this much is hard to imagine at times, yet it is proclaimed every time we gather here. But that a human being, one like ourselves would suffer and die for each and every one of us is just as astonishing.

He did not die because of Judas, or Pilate, or the Jewish leaders, or even His torturers and executioners, but rather He went willingly to the cross by His love for them. For the sake of His love for every Judas and Pilate and Peter and Paul and believer and atheist and for every sinner and saint throughout eternity, past, present and future God died, a human being... died.

And even though we know the end of the story, that the grave and even death itself could not hold Him ... there is still tremendous hope in His death, because it shows us that we too can love and sacrifice - even unto death. No greater love than this - than to lay down his life for us.