

Traveling with Jesus

I love to travel.. Perhaps a bit less so today than when I was younger. Going places is always an adventure for me - and usually a good one, especially when I can avoid sleeping on the floor in the airport because of a missed connection. It's not that I'm dissatisfied with life where I live. Not at all. But travel opens new horizons and helps you see the world through different eyes. And no traveler returns from his journey unchanged.

When I was a child, my father's church convention would take place in a different venue every summer - the third week of June, like clockwork.. We would construct our family vacations around that convention. We'd all pile into the sedan - never a station wagon; my father hated station wagons, and those were the days long before minivans - five sons and my parents, and take off for Seattle or Denver or Green Lake, Wisconsin, or Ocean Grove, New Jersey.

I loved it. Family lore has it that at the conclusion of one of those journeys of thousands of road miles, my mother playfully said as we pulled into the driveway, "Let's go again!" Yes, I replied. Let's go! Everyone else groaned.

Holy Week is a different kind of journey, a chance to view the world through different eyes. We've already begun the journey with Jesus as he walks into Jerusalem to the adulation of the crowds. And then suddenly, almost imperceptibly at first, the crowds turn against him. On Maundy Thursday, we dine with Jesus and his disciples as they break bread for the last time.

And then we travel with him to his betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane. On Good Friday, we trudge with Jesus up that lonely hill to Golgotha, the place of the skull, where he dangles between heaven and earth until his friends retrieve the slumping body and place it in a tomb. And then we walk with Jesus as he emerges from the tomb into the blinding light of Easter morning.

We're walking with St. John during this liturgical year, and John, as we've noted, is transfixed with the contrast between darkness and light. Time and again, he talks about Jesus as the light of the world. But a true appreciation of light comes only when you contrast it with darkness.

On this Holy Week, we walk with Jesus through the darkness of death. It alters our perspective. But death is never the final word. A week from today we emerge with Jesus into the blinding light of Easter. Having experienced the darkness, we have new appreciation for the light.

No traveler, after all, returns from his journey unchanged.

Palm Sunday

April 17, 2011

Christ Church

Middle Haddam, Connecticut