

Introduction To This Guide

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Where Do I Begin?

Begin each day with the Prayer of Illumination to help, prepare your heart to hear God's word for you. Read "to be formed and transformed rather than to gather information...Read with a vulnerable heart. Expect to be blessed...Read as one awake, one waiting for the beloved. Read with reverence."

Let us Pray a *Prayer of Illumination*:

All-Seeing One, above me, around me, within me —

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Look down upon me, look out from within me, look all around me.

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O Eye of God, look not away.

Create in me a clean heart, O God,

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Adapted from *A Tree Full of Angels* by Macrina Wiederkehr [As quoted in *A Guide To Prayer For All God's People*, Job & Shawchuck, The Upper Room]

PALM/PASSION SUNDAY - Day 40

ENTER: THE KINGDOM

Luke 19:36-42

As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching. The path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God. Joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power they had seen, saying,

"Blessed is the king

who comes in the name of the Lord!

Peace in heaven,

and glory in the highest heaven!

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes."

IT WAS POLITICAL

According to Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan,⁴⁴ this Palm Sunday entrance into Jerusalem was a highly orchestrated event. It is Passover, the time of year when thousands of pilgrims descend on Jerusalem to celebrate the most important holiday for the Jewish people: their liberation from the Egyptian Empire. But currently they find themselves under the oppression of the Roman Empire. That empire knows that Passover brings crowds, empowering certain groups, like the Zealots, to try to attain their own liberation. These are not usually peaceful demonstrations, so Roman troops are sent into Jerusalem to subdue rioters and keep the peace of Rome, or *Pax Romana*.

The authors point out that "two processions entered Jerusalem" that day. Pilate's procession entered from the west displaying imperial power (all authority and power over the people) and Roman imperial theology (Caesar is a son of God.) They proceed to the city as a "calvary on horses, foot soldiers, leather armor, helmets, weapons, banners, golden eagles mounted on poles, sun glinting on metal and gold..."[The

sounds of] marching feet, the creaking of leather, the clinking of bridles, the beating of drums...”

Jesus proceeds from the east “humble and riding on a colt, the foal of a donkey [as prophesied by Zechariah 9:9].” He is accompanied by a band of peasants, waiving palms, and praising Jesus as the *king who comes in the name of the Lord!* According to Zechariah this king will: “...cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war-horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations.” (Zechariah 9:10) So the stage is set: troops from the west carrying the power of the Roman Empire, and Jesus from the east ushering in the kingdom of God. These two conflicting powers descending on Jerusalem anticipate the showdown of events during Holy Week.

PRAYER

Reveal to us your ways of peace and how we may usher in the kingdom here on earth. Amen

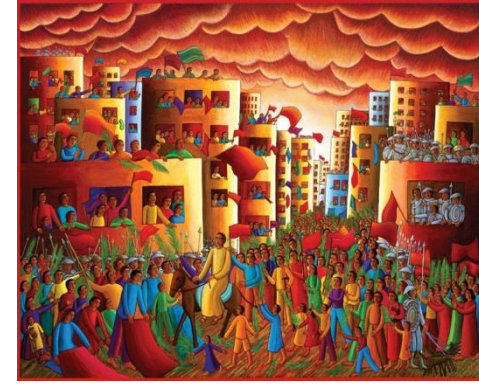
FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Name one thing you can do to usher in the peaceable kingdom.

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Lent 2022 – Day 40

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Entry into the City - John August Swanson

PALM/PASSION SUNDAY IT WAS POLITICAL



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MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK - Day 41

DISAPPOINTMENT AND BELIEF

John 11:20-27

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again. In the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

HOPE IN THE PRESENCE

Poor Mary and Martha. They could not have known that their brother's death, and subsequent resurrection, was only a foretaste of the emotional rollercoaster that would come.

Over the last year there have been times when I have lost hope: hope in our political system or hope that life will ever get back to some kind of normal.

Martha and Mary must have lost all hope of Jesus ever coming to their aid. They had even sent a "message to Jesus, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.'" (John 11:3) Yet Jesus did not show up and Lazarus died. How do we handle the disappointment when those we love do not show up when we need them the most. At that moment we can feel abandoned by everyone, including God.

But we see as we read through this story that Jesus was *present* to Martha and Mary, just not *physically* present; just as Jesus is present to us even in our hopelessness. When I am utterly hopeless, I get this overwhelming sense that God is in control. There are reasons *why* God allows things to happen as they do. And even though it's painful, and even though I don't understand, it doesn't mean that God is not *still* in control.

Martha saw that Jesus was on his way. Her brother had already died, but she had not lost hope that she would see her brother again, *in*

the resurrection. This story lets us know that however painful life can sometimes be, Jesus is always present. Jesus has a plan: life after death. Mary and Martha may indeed have sung: “You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever.” (Psalm 30:11-12)

PRAYER

In all things, dear Lord, “we do not lose hope, for if we hope for what we do not see we wait for it with patience.” (Romans 8:25) Help me to never lose hope in you, and to remember always that you have plan. You, O God, are in control. Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

When - in hindsight - has your faith in God been restored?

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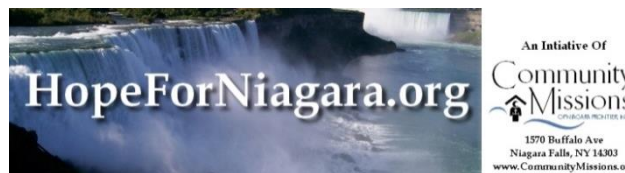
Lent 2022 – Day 41

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Entry into the City - John August Swanson

MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK HOPE IN THE PRESENCE



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TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK - Day 42

PREPARING TO GO

John 13:31-35

When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

GLORIFIED IN GOD

The passage begins, *When he had gone out...* We are in the middle of a story and so we ask: who *had gone out*, and why? And why does Jesus wait until *he had gone out* to start talking about how *the Son of Man has been glorified and God has been glorified in him...*?

The 13th Chapter begins with Jesus washing the disciples feet. Jesus finishes the lesson, "For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you;" and he talks about servants not being greater than their masters, and being blessed if you know what to do and you do it. (John 13:15-17) Then there is a turning point when Jesus speaks of *one...chosen*, "the one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me." (John 13:18) And he begins to speak of a betrayer; the disciples express concern, and Jesus dips his bread in the dish and gives it to Judas. (John 13:26) Then Jesus tells Judas, "Do quickly what you are going to do...and he immediately went out. And it was night." (John 13:27, 30)

And so it is *Judas* who has *gone out*, and Jesus has waited for Judas to go before he tells his disciples about the glorification of God that is happening *in him*. The Greek word used for glorified is *doxazo*. It means to "honor, praise, extol, magnify, celebrate, to render excellent or illustrious, and/or to cause the dignity and worth of some person to be manifest and acknowledged."¹⁰⁰

It is so difficult for us to understand the confusion of the disciples at this moment: they have all followed together, yet now one of them has left; they have always followed Jesus but now he is going where they cannot go. There is something *unexpected* happening. But we know the truth: Jesus' identity will soon be revealed. He is going to be extolled and magnified as Messiah. He will be affirmed and made manifest to all who believe. Now, he is preparing them for his departure with these words, that above all else, they will need to remember in the coming days: *By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*

PRAYER

Even and especially when life is confusing, Jesus, reveal yourself to me in the love of another. Amen

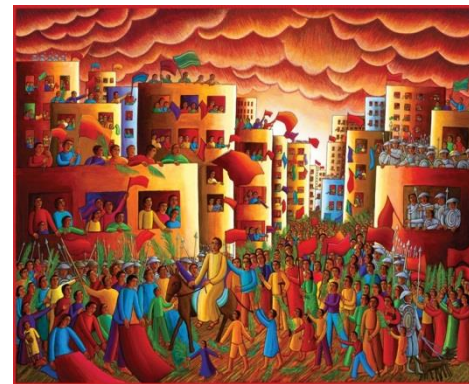
FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Describe a time when leaving someone/thing was difficult.

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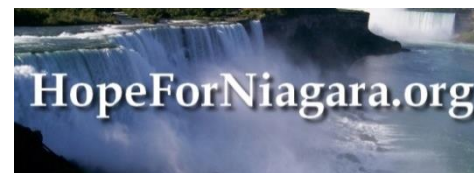
Lent 2022 – Day 42

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Entry into the City - John August Swanson

TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK GLORIFIED IN GOD



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WEDNESDAY OF THE HOLY WEEK - Day 43

STEADFAST OBEDIENCE

Isaiah 50:4-7

The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word.

Morning by morning he wakens - wakens my ear
to listen to those who are taught.

The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backward.

I gave my back to those who struck me,
and my cheek to those who pulled out my beard;

I did not hide my face from insult and spitting.

The Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to shame.

COSTLY LOVE

Wednesday of Passion Week. I cannot separate myself from the events of the coming days. I try to be like the disciples - not knowing yet what's coming - but I can't. I know what's coming. I know that as a 21st Century Christian I read this passage from the prophet and I see Jesus' suffering and steadfast obedience to God's command to love at all cost. And I wonder if at any time Jesus may have thought God would

ultimately spare him the agony, as he did Isaac on Mount Moriah. (Genesis 22)

Mark's Gospel tells us that this is the day when Jesus was visiting the home of Simon the leper and "as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar, and poured the ointment on his head." (Mark 14:3) This act raises a furor among the disciples because of its costliness, claiming that it could have been sold and the money given to the poor. But Jesus scolds them saying, "Why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me...She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial." (Mark 14:6, 8) Then we learn of Judas' plan.

Anointing invests God’s power, and sets someone aside for a Holy purpose. King David was first anointed “in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him from that day forward.” (1 Samuel 16:13) Anointing consecrates someone for a holy purpose. Anointing is blessing. Jesus is anointed in the presence of his disciples. Messiah, or Christ, means *anointed one*. The woman who anoints Jesus with her costly oil is not concerned with the monetary cost of what she is doing, but only with immersing her Lord in her loving devotion. *The Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.*

PRAYER

“I shall listen carefully as the Church proclaims the word of your saving passion and death for the sake of all worlds, all peoples, and all time. You alone are holy, you alone are Lord, you alone, [are] Jesus [the] Christ...”* Amen

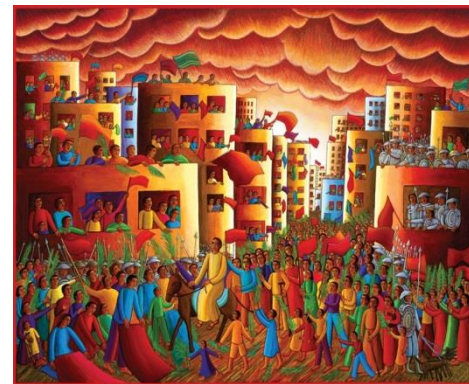
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When has someone been critical of your generosity?

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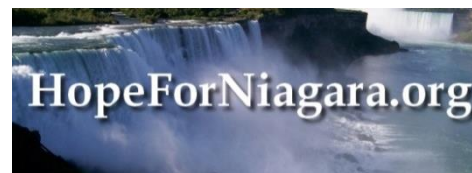
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- *Prayer, *Lent & Easter, Wisdom from Thomas Merton*, Linguori Publications, p. 91.
- **adapted from: For Courage to Do Justice #456, *The United Methodist Hymnal*, United Methodist Publishing House, 1989.
- ***Ibid, Amazing. Grace #378, first verse.
- ****Prayer, *Lent & Easter, Wisdom from Thomas Merton*, Linguori Publications, p. 101.

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HOLY THURSDAY - Day 44

GOOD NEWS

Isaiah 61:1-3

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
to provide for those who mourn in Zion -
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.

OVERTURNED

When I read this passage from Isaiah I think of being in court and having the guilty verdict brought by 'the jury of my peers' overturned by a loving and merciful judge. Someone who believes that "mercy triumphs over judgment." (James 2:13)

Isaiah's passage is good news for those we typically think of as oppressed, broken hearted, captives and prisoners, those who mourn, and those who are weighed down by criticism or abuse. But it may be easier for us to see these attributes in people that are *victims* of an offense, than for the offenders themselves, who may *also* be victims or prisoners of oppression, captive and broken. Seeing and acknowledging *both* sides is where the true power of *justice* is served.

The day of vengeance of our God implies that God will bring about *justice* for an offense. Justice requires right and fair treatment for all parties. *Vengeance* implies retribution, revenge, retaliation or punishment for the offender; but *mercy* suggests that we look a little deeper into who is the offender and why. If the offender is subject - or captive - to

an unjust system, then it is *the system* that needs correction as much or more than the offender. Justice for the offender must acknowledge the accountability of the unjust system that influenced the offender's actions. This doesn't leave anyone *off the hook*, but addresses to a greater degree the root of the problem, not just the fruit of the action. Jesus said, "Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but *woe to the one by whom* the stumbling block comes!" (Matthew 18:7)

PRAYER

O Lord, open my eyes that I may see the needs of others, my ears that I may hear their cries, my heart that I may give comfort. Let me not fear to defend the weak and poor because of the anger of the strong and rich. Equip me to provide love, faith and hope where they are most needed, that I may do some work of peace for thee.** Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

When have you been too quick to judge the accused?

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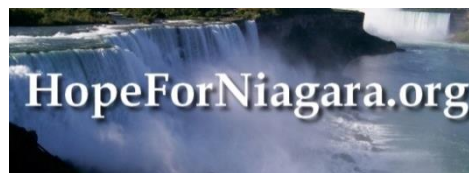
Lent 2022 – Day 44

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Entry into the City - John August Swanson

HOLY THURSDAY OVERTURNED



An Initiative Of
Community Missions
1370 Buffalo Ave
Niagara Falls, NY 14303
www.CommunityMissions.org

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Where Do I Begin?

Begin each day with the Prayer of Illumination to help, prepare your heart to hear God's word for you. Read "to be formed and transformed rather than to gather information...Read with a vulnerable heart. Expect to be blessed...Read as one awake, one waiting for the beloved. Read with reverence."

Let us Pray a *Prayer of Illumination*:

All-Seeing One, above me, around me, within me —

guide my vision as I engage with your sacred words.

Look down upon me, look out from within me, look all around me.

See through my eyes, hear through my ears, feel through my heart.

God of Wisdom, touch me where I need to be touched;

and when my heart is touched, give me the grace to lay

down this Holy Book and ask significant questions:

Why has my heart been touched by you?

How am I to be changed through your touch?

All-Seeing One, I need to change, I need to look a little more like You.

May these sacred words change and transform me.

Then I can meet You face to face...when I shall be healed forever.

Your Word and the touch of your Spirit bring healing...

a healing that will last.

O Eye of God, look not away.

Create in me a clean heart, O God,

and put a new and right spirit within me. Amen.

Adapted from *A Tree Full of Angels* by Macrina Wiederkehr [As quoted in *A Guide To Prayer For All God's People*, Job & Shawchuck, The Upper Room]

GOOD FRIDAY - Day 45

CONDEMNED AND REDEEMED

Luke 23:32, 39-43

Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him...One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned

justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

MERCY AND GRACE

I have heard it said that the difference between mercy and grace is this: Mercy is getting what we don't deserve, Grace is not getting what we do deserve.

The two criminals on either side of Jesus illustrate the good and evil in us all, and our potential for both condemnation and redemption. We are condemned and redeemed by the condition of our heart. Arrogance causes the first criminal to see his other two companions on the cross as equal to himself. But the second criminal sees his own unworthiness in the face of Jesus' righteousness.

How can we explain matters of the heart? What makes one human being continue to belittle, and berate an innocent victim while at the same time, in the same circumstances, another is humbled and repents his own sins? What hardens the hearts of some people, and allows others to be softened into confession and repentance? I believe it is that difficult word *submission* that makes the difference. Some people will fight with all their might to not give in, but *submitting* to God allows for God's grace to be manifest in us. Arrogance hinders submission. The Apostle Paul speaks to the sin of arrogance:

"To keep me from being too elated [boastful, arrogant] a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient

for you, for power is made perfect in weakness'...Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecution, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) *Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.*

PRAYER

"Amazing grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see."*** Allow your grace, O Lord, to enable me to submit to you in all decisions, and your mercy to envelope me when I stray. Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Name a time when giving in would have been better than holding out.

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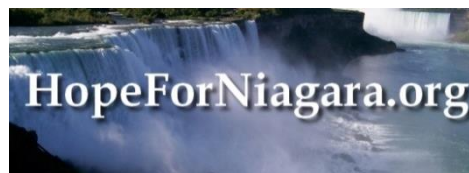
Lent 2022 – Day 45

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GOOD FRIDAY MERCY AND GRACE



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HOLY SATURDAY - Day 46

REST IN PEACE

Colossians 3:1-10

So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life. But now you must get rid of all such things - anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator.

REST IN PRAYER

It is *Holy Saturday*, you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Saturday, the horrific events of Friday are passed, Jesus has been betrayed by one of his chosen disciples, been denied by his most trusted disciple, been tried by those seeking to convict him, and been crucified between two criminals. Jesus, the man on whom they had pinned all their hopes of deliverance and peace, has died. Today he rests in a tomb, a new tomb in which no one has ever laid, a rich man's tomb. He is sealed off from his friends and closely guarded by his enemies. What is it like for Jesus dead? Does he 'descend into hell to minister to the dead' as some doctrines propose, or is he resting from the hard labor of life on earth. Is there rest for our Savior, or is he to be constantly and forevermore saving souls?

It is perhaps heresy to even think that Jesus the Christ, now in the tomb, rests. But I can imagine that this is how Jesus rests: praying. Because we have *seen* how Jesus rests, he goes up on the mountain to be with his Father. (Mark 6:30-46) And so, even as he rests, his heart and soul and mind are always petitioning the Father on behalf of the lost sheep who need saving. My hope is that Jesus my savior, as he lays

dead in his tomb, counts *praying* as resting; praying for those whose lives have passed from this earth but did not have or take opportunity to know him. Just as Jesus, being arrested in the garden, says, “I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me.” I can imagine him laying in the tomb, dead but still praying, “[Please Father do not let me] lose a single one of those whom you gave me.” (John 18:9)

PRAYER

There is much I do not understand about death, but my hope is that in death there is rest, and a peace that passes all understanding. (Philippians 4:7) Amen

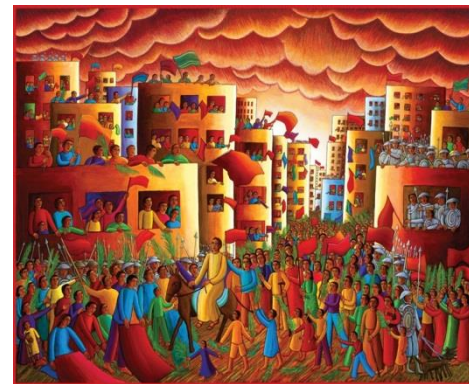
FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

What is your hope about death and life after death?

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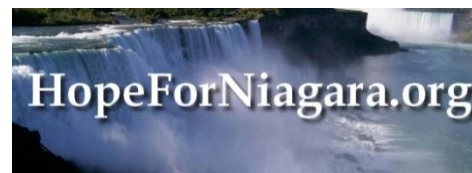
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SATURDAY OF HOLY WEEK REST IN PRAYER



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