

**PASSION SUNDAY (PALM SUNDAY) (4/4-5/2009)**

*Isaiah 50/4-7, Psalm 22, Philippians 2/6-11, Mark 14-15*

Looking for a way to save the world?

Sounds like an odd question, but here's a possibility.

Jesus' suffering and death has done precisely that – save and forgive all the world.

If you were to consciously join your own sufferings to those of the Lord, you too, in a real way, could share in the ongoing task of bringing the world to God.

I'm serious.

It's that simple, though it may not be easy.

What happens is that your suffering, whatever its shape or origin or duration or insignificance, assumes meaning when joined with that of the Lord.

It is lifted up, and made significant.

St. Paul and many saints down through the years have advocated such an exercise.

The church has been teaching this for centuries.

It's both a way to help save the world, and a way of giving meaning to your suffering.

We bring it up this weekend because Holy Week is beginning, and the central event of Holy Week is the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ.

It's that time, you see.

And the world needs once again to hear the story of salvation.

We are living through particularly dark days right now.

Economic uncertainty and job insecurity are daily realities for many people.

Fear of the future abounds.

Out of fear, it may be that people are isolating themselves more and more.

It's a family problem, a community problem, a national and beyond problem.

Fear of the stranger in our midst also seems to be growing.

Anyone who has to travel by air these days is subjected to many signs of paranoia, however justified they may seem.

Perhaps we can set aside our own fear and trepidation this week and concentrate on what Jesus went through for all of us.

See him carrying the pain and poverty of Darfur, the hopelessness of Somalia and Ethiopia, the growing mass of homeless and hungry in continental U.S., the unacceptable number of aborted children, the practical slavery of millions of workers in third world countries, the victims of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, the victims of debilitating disease, families suffering the onslaught of Alzheimer's.

That burden is precisely what you can help Jesus bear.

You bring two saving characteristics to the task.

One, your willingness to deliberately join Jesus in faith, to take up that cross he promised for his disciples.

And, two, your belief that, in the end, there is life and light and hope for all, and there is resurrection.