**Palm Sunday, April 13, 2014; Isaiah 50:4-9; Ps 31; Philippians 2:5-22; Matt 26:14-27:66; Rev. Mary Trainor**

For centuries Europeans looked out upon the western sea, the Atlantic Ocean, and they saw the glittering surface of the waters and they wondered if there was anything beyond. Scholars said that you could sail off the edge of the world-- that there was nothing out there at all. Their expectation was that there was nothing out there at all. Then, Columbus sailed west on the shiny waters. After a long time the sails reappeared and the crowds shouted with joy, as Columbus announced that he did not fall off but rather there was a land beyond the sea that was rich beyond their dreams.  For most of these people, their incorrect expectations got in the way of them knowing the truth.

Today, in our Palm Sunday Gospel readings, we saw incorrect expectations get in the way of people knowing the truth. They expected the long awaited Messiah to be a military leader to save them from the Romans, and shouted "Hosanna" (which means Savior) when Jesus entered Jerusalem. But then, they looked at the humble carpenter on the donkey and saw that Jesus did not meet their expectations. He was not the superhero king they were expecting....so they quickly abandoned Him. In the Passion Gospel, we heard these same people who had shouted "Hosanna" now jeer Jesus, and say "crucify him." Their expectations got in the way of their recognizing Jesus as the Messiah!

What expectations might we have standing in the way of us deepening our relationship with God, of our recognizing Jesus in our midst? These expectations about God can come from things others have said to us or taught us, or things we have read. We are often unaware of them -- they are just there, planted unconsciously in our brains -- and, as we see from today's Gospel, they can get in the way. Many people are full of guilt or shame, and they only see God as judge; as a result they are unable to receive God's love and recognize Jesus' presence right in front of them. Others see God as the grey-beard far far up in the clouds, and they miss out on connecting to our God who is accessible right here, right now. Still others see Jesus as only a human prophet and not fully God, and so they miss out on the profound news of forgiveness and new life obtained through Christ. In order to have our expectations become more accurate, in order to recognize God. We need, like Columbus, to set out on a great adventure -- in this case it is the great faith. This week, you have the opportunity to take such a journey, because this is a week set apart just for this purpose: Holy Week.

The centurion, a Roman officer, went on such a journey back on that first Holy Week -- we heard about him in the Passion Gospel. His government job was to supervise it all; he was in charge of all the Roman soldiers who whipped Jesus and who carried out the crucifixion. There he was on his horse, watching and probably trying to stay emotionally unattached, but on the way to the cross, his expectations were smashed and he recognized Jesus. He woke up to the truth at the foot of the cross and said, "***truly this man was God's Son!"***

This week you have the opportunity to journey with Jesus: to enter into the Passion of Christ that you might know Him more, to immerse yourself in Jesus. We are part of this great drama; it is not a play, it is our lives. We are in these scenes. It is a week in which put aside your tendency to watch Jesus from a distance, to be a spectator Christian. Allow yourself to be fully present. Be there when He is with his friends, be there when Mary anoints His feet with oil, be there at the Last Supper and in the Garden, be there when He is arrested, be there as He goes to the cross.

We have multiple services at different times during the week to aid you in this journey. And, as you journey, you will have firsthand experience, experience that will allow you afresh to discover the truth, to have your expectations set right, to experience and recognize Jesus for real, up-close and-personal. This is not one of those things that you can get by reading it. Put yourself in the scene and be there. Our betraying and straying turn into our rebirth. The name Jesus means, "**God saves**;" He came to save you and me. Amen.