

Father Dave's Weekly Homily

04/01/12 Palm/Passion Sunday B

-- A few years ago, Mel Gibson directed *The Passion of the Christ*. The most common remarks about the movie were about its graphic violence and depiction of physical pain. Jesus is not glorious here. He is not a dignified figure.

-- Though few of the words of that movie are taken from the gospel of Mark, the picture of Jesus' suffering and death fit well with the tone of Mark's passion account.

-- Jesus says very little during his trial. He's not the rabbi who cleverly answered his critics and shut them up. He is the suffering servant who did not shield his face from blows, spitting and insults.

-- Even his last words are shouted out, and they speak of abandonment. His disciples have run away, and even his Father seems far away.

-- Yet it is this suffering Messiah, seemingly stripped of all his dignity, who radiates God's presence. Jesus proves he is the Son of God through his suffering in death, more than he did through his many miracles.

-- And one man, standing at the scene, is converted in the process. He's not a Jewish authority; he's not one of the thieves crucified with Jesus.

-- He's a Roman centurion—a foreign soldier who just happened to draw duty that day. He sees Jesus die and proclaims *Truly this man was the Son of God!* He realizes that, despite all appearances to the contrary, Jesus has not been put to shame but is indeed who he says he is.

-- This Roman centurion represents all who would follow Jesus Christ from then on. They would come from all peoples and nations. They would resist the powerful people who would take divine power for themselves. Some would even go to their deaths for his name.

-- We stand in that line which goes back to the Roman centurion who stood watch at the cross of Jesus. We have witnessed his cruel suffering. We have also seen his great dignity in the suffering he endured.

-- He has proven to be who he claimed to be, the one sent from the Father, the one who saves us from sin and death.

-- May we not be afraid to say to all the world what the Roman centurion said, *Truly this was...and is the Son of God!*