

The palms arrived early this week so we stored them in a cool place to keep them fresh. Then this Saturday morning we decorated the church with them, and got the individual branches out and ready for all of you. The branches were still fresh, green and supple. Yet already they are starting to dry up, get a little stiff; and by the 5pm mass on Sunday they will be mostly dry; and on their way to becoming a fire hazard.

An apt metaphor for this remembrance, this celebration as we begin the most holy of times for us as Catholics.

An aspect of our egos, of our broken human condition, will be when we are challenged with a new or different idea, concept or thought, we will assume the other is wrong. We will even seek to “attack” the other and try to discredit them. We want to impose our will upon them, and this world; we wish to make the world work on our terms.

I have listened to ordinary persons criticize the pope, calling him anti-catholic; yet they themselves have had no theological training aside from maybe what they got in first communion decades ago. And all they get is a snippet from someone else who has an axe to grind.

We all do this at some level or another with others: “oooh that is a stupid idea. Ohh that is simply rubbish. Ohhh you are just a liberal/conservative hack.”

Did we ever stop to consider that maybe we simply may not be correct, or fully informed, or we are reacting from a place of false security?

The people acclaim Jesus as a possible king; based on a superficial understanding of him. They want a powerful King; a warlord who will expel the foreigners, who will bring true, pure religious practice and mandate that accordingly.

So they wave palms.

Jesus’ own disciples argue over who of them is the greatest. One will betray him, another will resort to violence to defend Jesus. They think the best is the strongest; the natural leader will be the one who acts the best.

Imperial forces will try to define him: “You are a King because people want to make you leader”.

Religious leaders will lie and distort him so as to protect their position, their way of worship; their skewed understanding of God.

It will all culminate with Jesus dead on a cross.

The challenge of Holy Week will be for us to not try to make Jesus, God, the faith into something that we want it to be and of which Jesus, God and the faith are not.

The challenge for us this coming week and beyond, will always be the work and the grace to be humble. The challenge for us this Holy Week and really our entire lives is to open our minds and hearts to God who transcends anything we can imagine.

We will need to recognize that when confronted and challenged, it is probably us that need to grow and change--not necessarily a pope, bishop, priest or teacher.

The challenge for us is to remain fresh, green and supple in our wisdom; to let God's grace move us forward.

Otherwise, we simply dry up, wither; and when truly need an experience of God; there is nothing there inside of us.