



The Pastor's Keyboard—Msgr. Richard Huneger

Today is **Palm Sunday**, the beginning of **Holy Week**, and this year we hear the Passion according to St Matthew on Sunday, as well as the every-year Passion according to St John on Good Friday. It is said that the gospels, which all present the Passion and Death of Christ at length, are simply Passion Narratives with a Preface. The Preface in all of them extends back as far as John the Baptist at the River Jordan, and the Baptism of Jesus. In Matthew and Luke, it extends back as far as the Conception, Birth, Infancy, and Childhood of Jesus. And in John the Preface soars all the way back to the eternal divine personal pre-existence of the Logos (while skipping Nativity, Infancy, and Childhood), a concern it shares with the majestic vision presented in Chapter 1 of Ephesians and Colossians by St Paul.

Holy Week represents the confused and **fickle shift** from Palm Sunday to Good Friday. On Palm Sunday Jesus is given a royal and jubilant welcome as he enters Jerusalem on a mule (the King's vehicle during peacetime, as opposed to a horse, his vehicle during warfare). But on Good Friday we hear the words "Crucify him!" After the double judicial process. One man's hope (that of the crowd on Palm Sunday) is another man's fear (that of Caiaphas, Jn 11:50) – will the crowds' recent enthusiasm trigger a repressive Roman response? It seems important to have a "sacrificial lamb": that "one" man die lest "the whole nation" perish. Hysteria? Crowd think?

We are used to **judicial proceedings**, in an adversarial system, with assertions challenged, to rub off any rough edges. We want the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, to prevail. Are claims with or without merit? based on rock or on sand? All along with the presumption of innocence of the accused, until proven guilty, before a jury of his peers, beyond reasonable doubt. We like to think that we who are in the tradition of British jurisprudence would never think of falling prey to predetermined outcomes, for "show"; "kangaroo courts" are not for us; "show trials" are for Russia or China, such folk as might be ready to snuff others out unjustly.

Last January, I started the New Year off with George Cardinal Pell's *Prison Journal Volume 1, The Cardinal Makes His Appeal* (Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2020); *Volumes 2-3* take the reader through the botched 2-1 appeal (against Pell, in spite of massive evidence regarding the invalidity of the charges), to the High Court of Australia where a 7-0 unanimous verdict agrees that there was nothing to the Cathedral-sacristy pedophile "story" against him, and that he had been the victim of public prejudice against Catholicism and an orchestrated media campaign riding that wave of prejudice, committing him to a predetermined verdict of guilty until proven innocent.

"When they give you a lemon, **make lemonade**." That's what Pell did. He used his time in prison (much of it in solitary confinement, no less), as an extended "retreat," journaling his experience. The logic of atheism, of "cancel culture," he notes, flows from failing to take seriously the words of Jesus: "Love your enemies." He practices daily spiritual "weight lifting" by intentional forgiveness. Lots of comments about cold food (bad), hot water in the shower (good). About bed, blankets, toilet, chair (he's tall, needs a higher one), in-cell and out-of-cell "workouts" in place and with restricted movement (he almost signed on as a professional athlete in his younger years, and he frequently comments on TV sports events). Many little reflections on the Liturgy of the Hours, Rosary, Bible, social trends, social pundits, some political events. Numerous times he mentions the help and great hope he received from, and saw in, the movements of *Opus Dei* and the *Neo-catechumenal Way*. As to "climate change," it seemed to him that "the emperor has no clothes" (and popes and bishops should leave the matter to scientists). Unable to celebrate Mass (but allowed to receive Communion from a chaplain), he really enjoyed "Mass for you at Home" on TV. Reflecting on recent decades of decline in Catholic practice and attendance at Mass, he felt that the New Mass after Vatican II should have adopted the Irish practice (also still present in our own hispanic community) of the people saying, out loud, after the Consecration, "My Lord and my God" (Doubting Thomas's words when he put his hands in the wounds of the Risen Lord). He also felt that celebrating Mass "*ad orientem*" ought to be the norm (something profoundly important is lost in translation in the way we usually celebrate the Eucharist). The prison pre-censored his mail – some days almost 100 letters. Many saw other "prisoners of faith" in Cardinal Pell; and church attendance in his archdiocese (Sydney) actually increased, as many decided to show up, in solidarity with him, aware of the injustice of his case. Would he have to serve his entire seven-year sentence, be able to survive to age 85? He prayed with St Francis de Sales: "My God ... at death may I have no grudges or resentments. May I have forgiven all my enemies and have sought and received your forgiveness." Cardinal Pell died January 10, 2023.