

I have a hand-written letter from my grandmother, dating back more than 50 years. It's the only surviving letter from her that I know about. Having her letter and reading her thoughts gives me a link to her after all these years. I cherish that link, because my grandmother lived in our home for the first 22 years of my life. I loved her.

That in a small way explains why we rehearse the story of our Lord from Palm Sunday to Easter every year during Holy Week. The story gives us a link to Christ after all these years. We cherish that link, because the story we read today recounts the central events in the history of Earth. For billions of us they are the central events in our lives. We love Christ, and we don't tire of hearing this story year after year.

We who don't like surprises feel the jolt when the jubilant and joyful crowds that lined the Lord's parade route into Jerusalem gave way so quickly to open hostility, treachery, injustice, denial, and death – all within a space of five days. How can public opinion change like that? One crowd shouts, "Hosanna!" The other crowd shouts, "Crucify!" I wonder if some people were in both crowds. Which crowd would we join?

Judas betraying Jesus with His perfidious kiss haunts us. How did he get into Jesus' inner circle? What was he thinking? He stands as a permanent symbol of the power of evil to destroy what is best in human life. But Christ?? What had he done to elicit such a betrayal?

I can ever forget strong, brash Peter breaking down and weeping when the cock crowed the second time, and the horror of what he had done broke over him like a killer wave. All his dreams – dashed! Months of his life in Jesus' company – all for naught! It all seemed like mockery there in the courtyard of the High Priest.

And central to the events and central to our lives is Jesus. He rides into Jerusalem, not on horseback like a king, but on the back of a borrowed donkey. He doesn't scold the woman who poured a year's wages' worth of perfume on His feet. He gives bread and wine new and immortal meaning. He anticipates betrayal, denial, and cowardice. He doesn't rage against or threaten His accusers. He maintains an eerie silence before the High Priest, the Roman Procurator, and the mocking soldiers. He utters the ultimate cry of desolation and dies.

We tell ourselves lots of stories about ourselves to buoy up our spirits and give meaning to our lives. We love rags to riches stories. We love stories of people who succeed against overwhelming odds. We love to tell ourselves that giving a few dollars to the poor compensates for our selfishness. Of course we want to hear His story every year. It is the story of the ages. It is the story of the humility of God and of the salvation of the world from our sins.

You may love rags to riches stories; His is the quintessential riches to rags story. We will continue to be enchanted by stories of people who succeed against overwhelming odds. His is the quintessential story of a Man who failed in spite of His overwhelming goodness. His is the story for the poor and the poor in spirit.

It's why we love Him. It's why we give Him our loyalty. It's why people make great sacrifices for Him. His story tells the big story in which our little stories can find a home and find meaning. And should the heavens roll up like a scroll and the earth perish by fire, the last man left alive would do well to quote the story of Holy Week and welcome at last the kingdom of God on earth.