

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion, April 13, 2025

You Did This for Me

Conversion experience of actress who played Veronica: In Mel Gibson's movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, the actress who played St. Veronica had a conversion experience, right there while filming the scene. *Sabrina Impacciatore* is an Italian actress, and although she had grown up Catholic, she had long ago stopped practicing her Faith. When they began filming, she was at a spiritual low point. She later explained that she wanted to believe in Jesus, but she just couldn't do it. Her scene in the movie is quite memorable. Jesus is carrying his cross to Calvary, and he falls again for the third or fourth time. The crowds surge around him, abusing him as he lies on the ground. Without much success, the soldiers try to control the crowds. And gliding through the middle of all this confusion is Veronica. She looks at Jesus with love and devotion. She kneels beside him and says, "Lord, permit me." She takes a white cloth and wipes his face, which is covered with blood, dirt, and sweat. She then offers him a drink. It's a brief moment of intimacy in the middle of violent suffering. Sabrina said it was a tough scene to film. The churning crowd kept bumping into her and disrupting the moment of intimacy. And so, they had to film it over and over again. Twenty times they had to film it before getting it right.

And that was providential. Because after twenty times of kneeling before the suffering Christ, looking into his eyes, and calling him Lord, the actress felt something melt inside her. She wasn't seeing the actor pretending to be our Lord; she was seeing our Lord himself. Later, she explained that while looking into his eyes, she found that she could believe. "For a moment," she said, "I believed!" That experience lit the flame of hope in her darkened heart. Sabrina finally understood the words Jesus spoke from the Cross when he said, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." The brutality of the scene made a big impression on her. She found herself thinking, "Jesus is someone I can trust, he went through this for me." Even when we reject him, scourge him, crown him with thorns, betray him, and finally crucify him, our Lord still continues to love us.

The Passion of Christ is God saying to us, "I will keep loving you." So as we enter into Holy Week, like Sabrina, the actress, like St. Veronica herself, let us look into the eyes of our Lord, giving ourselves to him in all things, praying for the grace not to be afraid to love ... not be scared to bring Him all of our sins, to bring to him our hurts, our doubts, our troubles, our hardness of hearts, our everything, trusting Him in everything. In doing this, our Lord will transform us into a true image of Himself.

Fr. Martin Ezeihuaku, MSP. Palm Sunday, April 13, 2025

Have you wondered why God gives so much? And love you so much!

No gift reveals the love of God than the gifts of the cross –

This gift came, not wrapped in fancy plastics but in passion.

Not placed around a tree but on a cross.

And not covered with ribbons, but sprinkled with his own blood.

Welcome to Holy Week, the triumph and tragedy leading up to Easter. Welcome to the week that changed the world.

Fr. Martin Ezeihuaku, MSP.