

Homily  
Palm Sunday  
Gospel of Mark  
St. Bernard Church  
Deacon Tim Sullivan

I don't watch a lot of tv. But there is one commercial I have seen recently numerous times. It's for Microsoft. There's one speaker on a stage. All of us watching on tv are the audience. The speaker uses loud, dramatic tones. His strongest line is this: "You have more power at your finger tips than entire generations that came before you."

Is this a true statement? What do you think?

I'm going to say that there's a bit of truth to what the commercial says. Computers, smart phones, all the technology available today, give us quicker access to some types of information than we've ever had before. But they do not give us greater absolute power than has been available in past generations.

When it comes to absolute power, there is nothing, no force on earth, that has ever been or ever will be more powerful than the suffering and death of Jesus.

Can a computer raise someone from the dead? Can a computer forgive our sins? Can a computer earn our salvation? Do we need a computer to communicate with the Creator of the universe? To experience His grace?

Let's take the life of just one saint who lived before the age of computers. Padre Pio. Saint Pio of Pietreicina. He was born in Italy in 1887. He died in 1968.

Saint Pio experienced such ecstasy in moments of prayer that he levitated. That means he was hovering above the ground. He had the gift of reading people's souls, knowing their sins even before they confessed them. He experienced bi-location, meaning that he was physically present in two places at the same time. And he suffered from the stigmata, the wounds of Christ, in his hands and feet. These wounds were painful. They bled. But they smelled of roses, and they never became infected.

Try this. Into your smart phone, say, "OK, Google, or, OK, Siri, I want to levitate, read people's souls, bi-locate and experience the stigmata," and see what happens.

Maybe you don't really want to levitate, read people's souls, bi-locate or experience the stigmata. Maybe we would be more interested in something more practical, like a supernatural healing.

The power of the death and resurrection of Jesus is available to all of us in every one of the sacraments of the Church. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: **“[The Church] believes in the life-giving presence of Christ, the physician of souls and bodies. This presence is particularly active through the sacraments, and in an altogether special way through the Eucharist, the bread that gives eternal life and that St. Paul suggests is connected with bodily health.... And so in the sacraments Christ continues to “touch” us in order to heal us.**

The Church teaches that the power of Jesus is always available to us in the sacraments. Whether we experience that power depends on our disposition, our level of faith, when we receive the sacraments.

We need to have 2 things to experience the power of Jesus in the sacraments: 1) imagination. Since we can't see Jesus in human form, we have to imagine his presence in some way. 2) an expectant, confident faith. We have to believe that His power will impact our lives.

Saint Paul told the Corinthians, “We appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain.”

The question for all of us, as we prepare to celebrate the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus, is “Are we taking full advantage of the power, the grace, that is available to each one of us in the sacraments of the Church, and especially in the Eucharist?” “Or are we receiving the grace of God in vain?”