

Brace and Petronella
A Palm Sunday Story



“Good Morning, Petronella. Did you sleep well last night?”

“At least forty winks! It’s Lent you know, Brace. Actually, I did sleep through the night. Without any winds to wake me, and the sea serene, I was able to sleep. You

know what it's like in a storm! Impossible! And though, it was chilly, I still have some sap within me that keeps me warm, although at my age!

"Well, my dear Petronella, let's not talk about age! I am so much older than you! I've lost count of the years!"

"I have to say, my dear Brace, that you looked absolutely stunning in the dawn's early light. The Red color in the horizon brings out the best in you.!

"Oh, Petronella, you're making me blush! I can take no credit for that. It's all the sun's doing. I just find myself in the right place at the right time. And, of course, it's not as if I can move! I've been in this very same place for millennia now."

"For me, a century, that's the life span of a pine tree."

"Ah yes, I remember when you were just a sprout! I loved watching you grow into the beautiful pine you became with so many branches and cones. I loved the way you were all "spruced up."

"That was some time ago! Look at me now! Time has taken its toll. Withstanding all the storms, the ferocious winds, the blazing sun in summer and the cold of winter, standing alone rather than in a pine forest where I would be more protected from the elements, I'm only a specter of what I once was! I pine for the days when I saw my reflection in the waters, and I was beautiful to behold."

"But you are still beautiful, especially when the snow falls gently, and you wear your winter coat! And I remember last year, when one of the people who must live in the big house came and wrapped you in a purple cloth, you looked so fetching!"

"I had almost forgotten that day when he came and wrapped me in purple. It was a very windy day and there were moments when the cloth was flying through the air. I wondered why he saw me as so special."



“Could it be that he saw in you a reflection of the image of the one they call Jesus, especially in his suffering. And if I remember correctly, it was on the day they call “Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord.” Don’t you remember how the people

from the big house would march around waving branches, except for last year and today when there are only a few people here.”

“Hmm, I wonder why that is? In years past, the house was always streaming with people.”

“I hear they are streaming in other ways this weekend. So much has changed in the past year! The numbers of people who have come have been far fewer than in past years. I understand that people have had to stay at home and isolate themselves because of a terrible illness. I know that those who have been able to come here have been so very grateful. So much suffering over the millennia that I’ve been here! If I weren’t a solid rock, I’m sure I’d be broken into little pieces, seeing so much suffering of our Mother Earth and all creation. I’m always having to “brace” myself for the next wave of pain and suffering in this world. I think that’s why I was given my name, BRACE ROCK.

“Brace, how is it that you know so much?”

“Well, Petronella, when you’ve been around as long as I have, you develop certain abilities. Believe it or not, over time, I was able to hear the prayers of all those people who come to the place. When people would see me, they would think of God as their “rock, fortress, strength.” I never let it go to my head, but I did feel great pride in knowing that the saw me as more than just as “rock solid.” As I said before, these people see us and see some reflection of our Creator and the one they call “Jesus, the Christ.” I know now that means, “God’s anointed.” And today is the day they remember his triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

“My dear, you know so much! I can’t hear people’s prayers and stories the way you do, given your age. But I am able to feel people’s pain and joy. They don’t know it but when someone sits in the chair below me, or touches my bark, or just leans against me, I can feel what they feel. Oh, Mr Brace, there is so much pain and suffering and loss in people’s lives. It’s bark breaking!”



“I think that’s why they see in you the reflection of Jesus who suffered so much out of love for the world. People look at you with all you’ve gone through, and

feel their pain reflected in you. And they feel Jesus' suffering on the cross through you."



"You know, Brace, I think the expression should be "wise as a rock."

"Hopefully, with age comes wisdom!"

“What you said before, about people feeling Jesus’s suffering through me, makes me feel like all the battering and buffeting I have known through my 100 years has meaning. I may be more and more “pine-less” but I’m not “spineless!”

“Oh, Petronella, you are anything but “spineless.” And, by the way, I love that you still have a sense of humor after all you’ve been through!” You have withstood so much and still you are standing and when you are wrapped in the purple cloth, you look quite regal!”

“Oh, look! Here comes that person, carrying the same purple cloth!”

“ Ah, yes! It’s that time of year again. If I had a voice that people could hear, I’d be singing, Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“And I would be on “pines and needles” waiting for him to pass by!

“Oh Petronella, you make me “ever grin!” I am so grateful I have had you as someone to talk to through all these years.

“The feeling’s mutual, Brace. But you must know that the day is coming when I will be cut down and all that will be left of me is a stump. You must see that I’m not flourishing the way that I once was. Will you miss me when I’m gone?”

“My dear, dear Petronella. I can already feel the earth quaking beneath me when I think of life without you. But I remember words, I heard spoken about Jesus. “A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse and a branch from his roots will bear fruit.” Jesus was cut down and hung on a tree yet he came back to life and look at all the fruit his life has born. Look at all those people who love him and find life in him!

“Well, Brace, you know I’ll never bear fruit but no matter what I’ll be “evergreen.”

