

## Homily of Palm Sunday Year C, 2022

**Luke 19:28-40; Isaiah 50:4-7; Psalm 22:8-9, 17-20, 23-24; Philippians 2:6-11; Luke 22:14-23:56**

Today is the sixth and last Sunday of Lent called Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord. It commemorates the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem days before he was crucified. Palm Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week. The passion narrative from the Gospel of Luke invites us to participate step by step in the passion journey of Jesus Christ.

Almost all Jewish prophets prophesied the coming of the messiah who was to redeem Israel from her oppressors. At the time of Jesus, Israel was governed by the Romans. Jesus' disciples were convinced that Jesus was a political messiah who would lead a rebellion against the Roman colonial rule and drive out the Romans. For that reason, on arriving in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, he was given a rousing and heroic welcome. We read in today's gospel, "As he rode along, the people were spreading their cloaks on the road; and as he was approaching the slope of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of his disciples began to praise God aloud with joy for all the mighty deeds they had seen. They proclaimed: 'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest'" (Luke 19:36-38).

John's Gospel is specific about palm branches: "They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, 'Hosanna!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Blessed is the king of Israel!'" (John 12:13). The tradition of blessing of palms and the name 'Palm Sunday' are based on John's Gospel. Waving of palm branches is an expression of victory. 'Hosanna' is an Aramaic word which means, "save us now."

Blessed palm is not to be thrown around or discarded as trash. It is kept reverently until next year when it is returned to the church to be burned and the ash is put on our forehead on Ash Wednesday.

I don't think that the people would have given Jesus such a rousing and heroic welcome if they knew he was not a political messiah. A few days later, the same crowd shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" I guess that the people were frustrated and disappointed that Jesus did not fulfill their expectation. If Jesus had overthrown the Roman leadership, everyone would have stood behind him. He would not have been crucified. Are we like the crowd? We get very disappointed, and frustrated, and upset when our expectations are not met, or when we fail to get what we want. Then, we become aggressive, destructive, or even murderous.

As we read in the gospel, Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a colt (a young donkey). Jesus chose to enter into Jerusalem on a donkey instead of a horse. He identified himself with a donkey which is a beast of burden, thereby fulfilling Isaiah 53:54, "He took up our pain and bore our suffering." As donkeys carry loads, Jesus carries our pains and sufferings.

During Jesus' time, horse was the means of transportation for the rich, the high and the mighty, while donkey was the means of transportation for the poor. By riding on a donkey, Jesus identified himself with the poor and the lowly. Jesus teaches us to do the same. He wants us to identify with the burdened, the needy, the sick and the suffering. And by riding on a donkey, Jesus teaches us the importance of detachment and humility. In Matthew 11:29, Jesus says, "Learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart."

Today's celebration becomes even more meaningful if Jesus makes a triumphal entry into our lives. May nothing stop Jesus' entry into our lives. Jesus says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, then I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me" (Revelations 3:20).

Lastly, St. Andrew of Crete writes, "Let us imitate those who have gone out to meet him, not scattering olive branches or garments or palms in his path, but spreading ourselves before him as best as we can with humility of soul and upright purpose ... It is ourselves that we must spread under Christ's feet..."

We sing together: *Jesus, we adore you, lay our lives before you, how we love you!*

Triumphant Jesus, save us now. Amen.

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