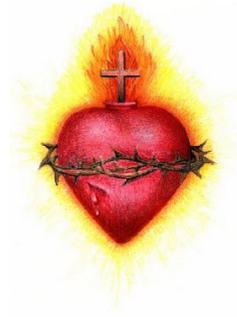


Scripture Study

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion – Cycle A



Opening prayer

(Processional Gospel: Matthew 21:1-11) Is. 50:4-7 (Ps 22) Phil. 2:6-11 Matt. 26:14-27:66

Overview of the Gospel:

- The events related in this Sunday's **Processional Gospel** reading takes place the Sunday before Holy Week. This Thursday, Jesus will institute the Holy Eucharist and the priesthood. On Friday he will be unjustly tried, tortured, and die upon the Cross for the sins of mankind. In exactly a week, he will rise gloriously from the grave, defeating Satan and death.
- Jesus now enters Jerusalem in triumph. Whereas he had previously entered the city quietly, he now does so publicly since his mission is almost completed.
- Jesus' entry into Jerusalem recalls that of another king—King Solomon (see 1 Kings 1:32-49). Both are called "Son of David;" both ride a donkey (or mule); both were celebrated by a great crowd; both entries caused a commotion in the city.
- The crowd greets Jesus as a victorious king, sure that he will liberate Roman-occupied Israel in the manner foretold by the prophets (Zechariah 14:3-21). Their shouts of praise will turn into cries of condemnation, however, when Jesus turns out to be a different kind of king than the one they expect (Zechariah 9:9-10).

Questions:

- The 1st Reading from the prophet Isaiah describes the Suffering Servant of the Lord and how he is faithful to his call. How are we called to imitate this servant in both attentiveness to God's word, and in bearing our share in the hardships of spreading the Gospel?
- In the 2nd Reading, we hear St. Paul quote an early Christian hymn in praise of the divinity of Christ. How cognizant on a daily basis are we that Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Savior, is both fully man *and* fully God? What is the implication of each of these truths for our daily lives?
- In the Gospel, to what town has Jesus come? Why (Mt 23:27; Mark 10:32-33; Luke 13:33)?
- Jesus comes on a donkey rather than a stallion. What does this portray (Zech 9:9-10)? What kind of king were the people expecting? How do their wishes compare with the reality of Jesus? How might that discrepancy account for the same crowd jeering and shouting later, "Crucify him!" (Mark 15:12-15)?
- What difference does it make to you that Jesus is a gentle king, and not like the one described in Matthew 20:25? How would you have reacted if you had been there to greet Jesus riding into town? Do you jump on political or religious bandwagons today? Why or why not? Does Jesus' humility "work" for you? Why or why not?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 557—560, 571—591, 595—618, 624—630

Closing Prayer

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!

In all that He did from the Incarnation to the Cross, the end Jesus Christ had in mind was the gift of the Eucharist, His personal and corporal union with each Christian through Communion. He saw in It the means of communicating to us all the treasures of His Passion, all the virtues of His Sacred Humanity, and all the merits of His Life. --St. Peter Julian Eymard

"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord"



Scripture: *Matthew 21:1-17*

And when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Beth'phage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find an ass tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If any one says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and he will send them immediately." This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, "Tell the daughter of Zion, Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of an ass." The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the ass and the colt, and put their garments on them, and he sat thereon. Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the

crowds that went before him and that followed him shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" And when he entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, "Who is this?" And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee."

Meditation: Does the King of glory find a welcome entry in your heart and home? Jesus went to Jerusalem knowing full well what awaited him -- betrayal, rejection, and crucifixion. The people of Jerusalem, however, were ready to hail him as their Messianic King! Little did they know what it would cost this king to usher in his kingdom. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem astride a colt was a direct fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy of Zechariah (9:9): *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion. Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem. Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, and riding on an ass and upon a colt the foal of an ass.* The colt was a sign of peace. Jesus enters Jerusalem in meekness and humility, as the Messianic King who brings victory and peace to his people. That victory and peace would be secured in the cross and resurrection which would take place in a matter of days at the time of Passover.

Augustine, the great 5th century church father, comments on the significance of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem: "The master of humility is Christ who humbled himself and became obedient even to death, even the death of the

cross. Thus he does not lose his divinity when he teaches us humility. ..What great thing was it to the king of the ages to become the king of humanity? For Christ was not the king of Israel so that he might exact a tax or equip an army with weaponry and visibly vanquish an enemy. He was the king of Israel in that he rules minds, in that he gives counsel for eternity, in that he leads into the kingdom of heaven for those who believe, hope, and love. It is a condescension, not an advancement for one who is the Son of God, equal to the Father, the Word through whom all things were made, to become king of Israel. It is an indication of pity, not an increase in power."
[Tractates on John 51.3-4]

Psalms 24 is another prophetic passage which echoes this triumphal procession of the King of glory: *Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in.* Jesus Christ came to bring us the kingdom of God. He is the true King who offers peace, joy, and everlasting life for those who accept his kingship. Do you give the Lord Jesus full reign in your heart and in your home? And do your walls echo with the praise of his glory?

"Lord Jesus, be the King and Ruler of my heart, mind, life, and home. May my life reflect your meekness and humility that you may be honored as the King of glory!"

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