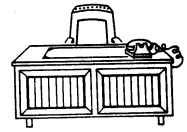


Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

April 2, 2023



From the Desk of
Fr. Romanus

Dear Parishioners,

Palm Sunday Reflection:

This weekend, we join fellow Catholics and other Christian communities all over the world in celebrating Palm Sunday. It recalls the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, where the events of the Paschal Mystery will unfold in rapid succession. Before entering Jerusalem, Jesus spent some time in Bethany visiting with friends, doing last minute miracles, and teaching the people. In Jerusalem, the prophecies about the Messiah will be finally fulfilled in the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Knowing what Jesus knew about his fate in Jerusalem, many of us would have dreaded going there. However, as a man on a mission, Jesus was undeterred by the challenges and adversities that lay ahead. With renewed anticipation and determination, we are invited to accompany Jesus on his triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

Palm Sunday is one of those events in Jesus' life recorded by all four canonical gospels (Mark 11:1-10; Matthew 21:1-11; Luke 19:28-40; and John 12:12-16). One of these gospels is proclaimed at the beginning of the entrance procession and separate from the passion narrative. This Sunday, we read from Matthew's gospel where Jesus sends two of his disciples to fetch the tethered ass and colt he would ride for the big entry into Jerusalem. Jesus is portrayed as fully in control. There is no room for negotiations, not even with the animals' owner.

The crowd responded to Jesus' triumphant entry with resounding enthusiasm that underscored his Messianic identity. Tree branches were strewn on his path, not to impede his progress but in honor and adoration. John's gospel is the only gospel that mentions 'palm branches.' The synoptic gospels speak of 'branches' or 'leafy branches.' That detail is important for John since the palm branch is a symbol of triumph and victory in Jewish tradition. Some even laid down their garments for him to walk on. The enthusiastic crowd welcomed Jesus as King, proclaiming: "Hosanna in the highest."

Of course, the irony is not lost on us. Some in the crowd would be among those screaming for his crucifixion in the passion narrative. With friends like these, who needs an enemy! The lesson is that those who put their faith in human beings rather than God are bound to be disappointed.

We participate in the memorial of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem with blessed palms. The blessed palms are not to be discarded or thrown into the trash bin. Rather, they are to be kept in a special place in the house, and collected for burning to make ashes for next year's Ash Wednesday or simply buried in the ground. Who says the Church does not promote recycling? Unfortunately, ashes from our burnt palm fronts are not as smooth as those specifically packaged for Ash Wednesday.

Wishing you a blessed Holy Week! **Fr. Romanus**