



PASSION / PALM SUNDAY ◆ April 05, 2020

When Jesus came into Jerusalem on that very first Passion Sunday, people were so happy to see Him that they took palm branches right off the trees and placed them on the ground for Jesus' donkey to walk over. It must've been a wonderful sight to see everyone so excited – the crowd waving the palm branches, Jesus riding on a donkey instead of walking as He usually did, people craning their necks to try to get a good look at Him while other people were shouting at the top of their voices: "...**God save the son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**" It must've been quite a spectacle – maybe a little like **The Mummers** parade or a **St. Patrick's Day** parade.

Unfortunately, however, the joy and the happiness we experience as we wave triumphantly our palm branches in the air doesn't last for long. Later on in the Mass of the day, we read St. Matthew's account of Jesus' Passion and Death. It's a sad story that tells how Jesus was betrayed, how He was unjustly tried and convicted, tortured and finally put to death. We begin Mass all happy and filled with joy. But then we are plunged into sadness and sorrow. The celebration of Passion Sunday is filled with powerful emotions.

Today, our joy at the approach of Easter is tempered by the sorrow we feel over those who have been affected by the Corona virus. We lift up in prayer all those who have passed away. We reach out in support of their loved ones and family members. We also hold close to our hearts all first responders and the medical professionals who labor on the frontlines of this pandemic. We can never thank them enough for their sacrifice and dedication.

The Liturgy today invites all of us to recognize that sometimes we experience things in life that make us happy and sometimes we experience things in life that make us sad. Joy and sorrow are often mixed together in life, just as births and deaths follow one after the other as we live our lives on earth. The message that comes to us today in the Liturgy is that suffering and sorrow do not last forever. Jesus - by his death on the Cross – has overcome sadness and suffering for us. We proclaim this truth of our faith every time we recite the Memorial Exclamation at Mass:

"Save us, Savior of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection, you have set us free."

.....

An Introduction to the Liturgy:

While many of us would normally gather together with our fellow parishioners in our parish church of St. Augustine to begin Holy Week with the celebration of Passion/Palm Sunday, this year we will experience the Holy Week liturgies thru live-streaming on our televisions or computers. Below are just two suggestions that might help us celebrate the Passion Sunday/Palm Sunday liturgy in a meaningful way when our actual presence in our parish church is not possible:

- 1) Before Mass begins, the gospel of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem (Matthew: 21, 1-11) or the account of his Passion (Matthew 26: 14-27, 66) can be read out loud either individually or within a family circle. Then the individual or a family member could share what feelings the reading stirred up in them;
- 2) If there are young children at home, they could be encouraged to draw a palm branch or other item/image from the gospel reading (adults could do this also). They might even want to color their drawings. Then, at the appropriate time, the individual or family members could walk around their home waving their newly created "palm branches." If weather permits, they could even walk outdoors.

May you have a blessed Holy Week and a Happy Easter Season!

Fr. James Keating, O.S.A.