

Scripture Study

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion – Cycle B



Opening prayer

Processional Gospel: Mk 11:1-10

Is. 50:4-7

(Ps 22)

Phil. 2:6-11

Mark 14:1—15:47

Overview of the Gospel:

- The events of this Sunday's **Processional Gospel** reading take place the Sunday before Holy Week. The following 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 from today, 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:

- How is the 1st reading from Isaiah a prophecy relating to Jesus? In what ways are we to imitate our Lord as he is described here? In Psalm 22?
- At the beginning of the 2nd reading, we see that Jesus has had equality of God from all eternity. At the end of the reading, we again read about his exaltation and glory. What do we read about him in the *middle* of the reading? What significance does that have?
- In the Gospel, to what town has Jesus come? Why (Matthew 23:27; Mark 10:32-33; Luke 13:33)
- Jesus comes on a donkey rather than a stallion. What does this portray (Zechariah 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)?
- 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?
- What difference does it make to you that Jesus is a gentle king, and not like the one described in Matthew 20:25? Does Jesus' humility "work" for you? Why or why not?
- What does Good Friday and Easter mean to you? What will you do this week to prepare yourself spiritually for these most holy of Christian observances?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 449, 557-560, 571-572, 606-614, 713, 2605-2606

Closing prayer

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!

In all 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"

Gospel Reading: *Mark 11:1-10*

And when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, and said to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat; untie it and bring it. If any one says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'" And they went away, and found a colt tied at the door out in the open street; and they untied it. And those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" And they told them what Jesus had said; and they let them go. And they brought the colt to Jesus, and threw their garments on it; and he sat upon it. And many spread their garments on the road, and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields. And those who went before and those who followed cried out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is coming! Hosanna in the highest!"

Meditation: Does the King of glory find a welcome entry in your home and heart? 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 donkey and upon a colt the foal of a donkey.

The colt was a sign of peace. Jesus enters Jerusalem in meekness and humility, as the Messianic King who offers victory and peace to his people. That victory and peace would be secured in the cross and resurrection which would soon take place 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*)

Psalm 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. Does the King of glory find a welcome entry in your heart and home? 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"