

Palm Sunday



Following Him Wherever He Leads Us

His death frees us from enslavement to sin. This phrase from the opening prayer of last Friday's Mass calls us to a living experience of this Sunday's celebration, Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion.

The crowd was enthusiastic. They waved palms, cried Hosanna, and hailed the Messiah's entrance into Jerusalem. As the prophet Zechariah had foretold in the ninth chapter of his Book, the Savior came meek, riding on an ass. The world was being turned upside down. The time of the Messiah was here. But he was a very different type of Messiah. He was not a military leader. He entered the city in a humble way, on a donkey. He would be driven out of the city in an even lower way, carrying a cross.

We are tempted to consider Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem, but ignore His exit from the city. It is easy to join in the joyful celebrations of our faith. We go to Church on Christmas and Easter and leave full of warmth. We go to confession or receive communion and feel His love within us. We present our children for baptism, communion and confirmation, and overflow with love for them and the God who calls them to Himself. We attend a retreat or conference and have a deep experience of the Lord's presence. And so we say, "Isn't it great to be a Catholic?" In these and many other ways we join the crowd welcoming the Messiah into our city, into our lives.

Then we realize that the palms are followed by the passion. And the joy of experiencing the Presence of the Lord is followed by His demand to join Him in the journey of sacrificial love, in the journey up to Calvary.

And this is difficult, at times even overwhelming. We know that we are called to stand apart from the immoral aspects of society. We know that we are called to be holy. But we are continually drawn in to join those who don't for a second care about God. Certainly they see no relationship between their actions and their own Creator. They are the vocal majority. They host the best parties with all the worst elements. They confuse freedom with licentiousness. They tell us to abort the child and join the party. They laugh at our decision to care for a special needs child. "Look at all you are missing," they say. And we can be overwhelmed by our decision to choose the Lord rather than go along with the crowd.

But then we look at the cross. And we say, "Look at all you are missing," We see how much our God loves us. We shout out, "It is good for us to be here," not on the Mountain of the Transfiguration, but on the Mountain of Calvary. And we experience the joy of following Him, following Him not just in the triumph of the palms, but also in the triumph of the cross. We walk away from the immoral crowd and walk with Jesus. He draws us to Himself, to His cross. And in this way He frees us from enslavement to sin.

This Sunday appears to be about two events, the entrance with palms into Jerusalem and the exit with a cross to Calvary. But it is really about one event: the call to follow the Lord wherever He leads us in joy and in sorrow.

May our celebration of Holy Week and Easter lead us to a deeper personal experience of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

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