

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord 25 March 2018

“Blessed is he who comes as King in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest!” Lk. 19:38

Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem is an event of great magnitude because it shows how the people hailed Jesus as the Messiah in a great acclaim of praise: ***“Hosanna! In the highest! Blessed is he who comes as King in the name of the Lord!” Lk. 19:38*** It was customary for the people to greet pilgrims to Jerusalem as they approached the city. With Jesus, it began at Bethany with hundreds who joined His disciples in escorting Him to Jerusalem. The people came out with palms and olive branches to salute Him, and they also spread their cloaks on the ground before Him in homage. St. Andrew of Crete would remind us likewise to pay homage to Our Lord and Saviour: ***“So let us spread before His feet, not garments or soulless olive branches, which delight the eye for a few hours and then wither, but ourselves, clothed in His grace, or rather clothed completely in Him.” (Sermon 9 on Palm Sunday)*** Let us give Jesus a contrite and humble heart, the fruit of His great victory on the cross. Let our souls take the place of the welcoming branches, as we join today in the children’s holy song: ***“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the King of Israel.” Lk. 19:38***

The Mystery of Man’s Salvation

St. Andrew of Crete tells us of the great mystery that is beginning on this day with Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem. ***“Come, and as we make our way up to the Mount of Olives, let us go out to meet Christ, who is returning today from Bethany, and of his own will makes haste towards his most venerable and revered passion, whereby he will bring to fulfilment the mystery of the salvation of mankind.” (Sermon 9 on Palm Sunday)*** Let us not be like the proud Pharisees who objected to the shouts of the children and the people. Jesus welcomes their praise for if they had not praised Him, the very stones would have shouted out: ***“I tell you that if these keep silence, the stones will cry out.” Lk. 19:40*** Let us also be like Jesus who wept for the city of Jerusalem because it rejected Him on Good Friday. What Jesus says about Jerusalem, He could say of

us today for our world has also rejected Jesus Christ and His Gospel and His Commandments. This is the symbolic meaning of what the prophet Zachary says of Jesus: ***“Shout for joy, O Daughter of Jerusalem! Behold thy King will come to thee; the Just and the Saviour. He is poor, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.” Zach. 9: 9*** Dom Gueranger in *The Liturgical Year, Vol. 6* tells us of its symbolic meaning: ***“The Holy Fathers have explained to us the mystery of these two animals. The ass represents the Jewish people, which had been long under the yoke of the Law; the colt, upon which, as the evangelist says, no man yet hath sat (cf. Mk.11:2) is a figure of the Gentile world, which no one had ever yet brought into subjection. The future of these two peoples is to be decided a few days hence; the Jews will be rejected, for having refused to acknowledge Jesus as the Messias; the Gentiles will take their place, to be adopted as God’s people and become docile and faithful.”*** Gueranger, p. 193

Triumph and Tragedy

Who can account for this dramatic shift in the people who cry out, ***“Hosanna in the highest,”*** and then just five days later, as we see in today’s Gospel Mt. 26:36-75; 27:1-60, these same people shout, ***“Crucify him”!*** (Mt. 27:23) The answer can be found in our own hearts. St. Bernard tells us: ***“How different the cries, ‘Away with him, away with him, crucify him’ and then ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, hosanna in the highest!’*** How different the cries are that now are calling him ***‘King of Israel’*** and then in a few days will be saying, ***‘We have no king but Caesar!’*** What a contrast between the green branches and the cross, between flowers and the thorns! Before they were offering their own clothes for him to walk upon, and so soon afterwards they are stripping him of his and casting lots upon them.” ***(Sermon on Palm Sunday, 2, 4)*** Jesus’ triumphal entry and His subsequent Crucifixion remind us, as Fr. Gabriel, OCD tells us in his book of meditations, *Divine Intimacy*: ***“...of the twofold meaning of the Procession of Palms: it is not enough to accompany Jesus in His triumph; we must follow Him in His Passion, prepared to share in it by stirring up in ourselves, according to St. Paul’s exhortation (Today’s Epistle: Phil. 2:5-11), His sentiments of humility and total immolation which will bring us like Him and with Him ‘unto death, even to the death of the Cross.’ (Phil. 2:8)***

Fr. Gabriel, p. 392 Because of Jesus' "...*obedience unto death of the Cross. Therefore God also has exalted him and has bestowed upon him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend of those in heaven, on earth and under the earth.*" *Phil.* 2:8-10

Victory over Death

Today's palm branches, blessed by the priest and pledged to bring blessings on ourselves and our homes, represent the victory which Jesus will win over death. This is why the Holy Spirit inspires the whole of Jerusalem to come out to meet His Son on His entry into Jerusalem: "**As soon as it is known that Jesus is near the city, the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of those Jews, who have come from all parts to celebrate the feast of the Passover. They go out to meet our Lord, holding palm branches in their hands, and loudly proclaiming Him to be King....Thus did God in His power over men's hearts, procure a triumph for His Son, and in the very city which, a few days later, was to clamour for His Blood.**" Dom Gueranger, *Ibid*, p. 193-4.

"Swing back, doors, higher yet; reach higher, immemorial gates, to let the king enter in triumph." *Antiphon for Palm Sunday*

If we let Christ into our lives in triumph, reaching higher and higher, then we will overcome all the misery of sin which blurs our vision of life and numbs our conscience. Let us go to the cross with Mary, the Mother of God. She will teach us how to remain constant and grow in love for her Son Jesus. May we be close to her during these days of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of her Son. We will not find a more privileged place.

Addenda: How to attend Holy Mass

"The Holy Mass is a prayer itself, even the highest prayer that exists. It is the sacrifice, dedicated by our Redeemer at the Cross, and repeated every day on the altar. If you wish to hear Mass, as it should be heard, you must follow with eye, heart, and mouth all that happens at the altar. Further, you must pray with the Priest the holy words said by him in the Name of Christ and which Christ says by him. You have to associate your heart with the holy feelings which are contained in these words, and in this manner you ought to follow all that

happens at the altar. When acting in this way, you have prayed Holy Mass."

Bl. Pius IX on the Holy Rosary

Sister Lucia in her book, "*Calls from Fatima*," wrote of Blessed Pius IX's testimony on his deathbed: "On his death bed, he said to those around him: **'The Rosary is a compendium of the Gospel, and gives to those who pray it those rivers of peace of which the Scriptures speak; it is the most beautiful devotion, the most abundant in grace, and the most pleasing to the Heart of Mary. My sons, let this be the testimony by which you remember me on earth.'**" (February, 1878) (Recall that Blessed Pius IX proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary by the Bull "*Ineffabilis Deus*" in 1854.)