

Today with Palm Sunday, we begin Holy Week, made holy by the celebration of the gift of Jesus himself to us and for us. With Holy Thursday we enter **The Triduum**, the 3 most sacred days of the Church. Thursday celebrates the gift of the Eucharist and Jesus' example of service (the washing of the feet). Friday is "Good" because we remember he loved us even to his death on the cross. Saturday, we wait for the celebration of the Resurrection, with the Blessing of the New Fire, the Easter Candle, the Baptismal Water, etc. We begin the week reading the long Passion Narrative. This year, it is Matthew's Gospel.

Let's focus for a moment on the palms and the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. The palms are key to our understand of who Jesus is. We bless palms today, the very ones that people will receive with joy when this pandemic is over, and we are able to gather again as a faith community.

Consider: Jesus enters humbly, on a donkey but with majesty: people acclaim him king, spreading branches and their cloaks on the ground to welcome Him. He enters freely. Contrast that with the entry of Roman soldiers: they would enter the city with arrogance and on horses, and with intent to oppress. The purpose of the One is to liberate from selfishness and sin; that of the latter is to oppress people. Question: Do I believe in the power of the Cross to save?

The palms represent our not being fully ready and engaged in this power. The story is also about us, about people welcoming Jesus into our cities and towns, our country. And about other people too eager to betray Him. Do we accept Him as the fulfilment of God's promise? We shout, "Hosanna to the King!"

This year I'm going to try to give palms their true meaning:

- I want the palms to remind me of my prayer - recognizing my desire to ask God to save me.
- I want the palms to represent my temptation to ambivalence, and how I am too easily persuaded by the crowds to deny my need for him.
- I want the palms to represent my gratitude for his self-giving love for me
- I want the palms to represent my desire to be a servant for others, like Jesus, and with Jesus.
- I want the palms to remind me that his Passion – and my participation in carrying my cross - leads to Resurrection (His and mine)

Throughout the year, the palm branches can be a continuing reminder of how much he loves me and how deeply I want to respond, "Hosanna to the King!"

Fr. Brian