

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion
April 17, 2011

What we do here today is important. Important not only for the way we celebrate this liturgy but for the way we celebrate life. Important for the way we worship, important for the way we live.

We have two names for this Sunday: it is Palm Sunday and it is Passion Sunday. In the procession we pray "Today we honor Christ our triumphant King," but in the Mass we pray "You have given the human race Jesus Christ our Savior as a model of humility." In the procession we sing "Hosanna to the King," but in the Responsorial Psalm we sing "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" The reading from Paul reminds us that Jesus "emptied himself... became obedient unto death," then proclaims that "every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." The Gospel of the procession cries, "Behold, your King comes to you," but the Gospel of the Mass ends "Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last."

We have a tension here. We have palms bending in adoration and reeds that strike a thorn-crowned head. We have a king and a convict. We have hosannas and mockery. We have triumph and tragedy. All in the one liturgy. Passion/Palm Sunday. Today we enter with growing intensity into the *whole* paschal mystery. Not palms *or* passion. Both. Not triumph *or* tragedy, triumph *in* tragedy. Not a dying *or* a rising Christ. A dying-rising Christ. The paschal mystery is one mystery: life in and through death.

Jesus Christ died and rose *for us*. Not only did he himself journey to Jerusalem. He commanded us to follow him on that journey. It is a journey that goes to life through death. For the human journey to go forward, to move ahead, we have to let go of where we've been, so as to live more fully. Essential to the human pilgrimage, to the Christian journey, is a self-emptying more or less like Christ's own emptying. Time and time again, from womb to tomb, we have to let go. And to let go of yesterday is to die a little. But only by dying will we rise to fresh life. Only by letting go of yesterday will we open ourselves to tomorrow, to being surprised by the Spirit.

Parishioners and good friends in Christ Our Hope: If we want to celebrate both liturgy and life these eight days, I repeat my three suggestions from the Palm Sunday procession: 1) Don't divorce passion and palms, Good Friday and Easter. 2) Act today, and all week like risen Christians. 3) Let all your dying be a new living. There is no dying that does not bear within it the seeds of fresh life.

Paul A. Magnano
Pastor