

Palm Sunday A

We are entering into the Holy Week today when we will be celebrating the most important events of our salvation—Jesus’s last supper, His death, and resurrection. Today we are entering into the last week of Jesus’s life on earth with the celebration of Palm Sunday. On that day when Jesus entered Jerusalem, people welcomed Him into the Holy City with shouts of “Hosanna,” throwing their cloaks on the ground, and waving tree branches in their hands. They acclaimed Him and welcomed Him as their king.

Today’s celebration of Palm Sunday is **unusual** and special for me. It is unusual because this year it is a celebration without a congregation—with empty pews. I feel like Jesus without the crowd that welcomed Him in Jerusalem. Or, rather, I feel like the donkey with Jesus on its back—with no one around with shouts of welcome and no one around to greet. Today’s celebration is also **special** for me because I was able to visit the Holy Land a few months ago, and walked down the road that Jesus would have taken that day to enter Jerusalem with people welcoming him with shouts of “hosanna.” Therefore, today while we celebrate Palm Sunday, I can picture in my mind the road that Jesus took that day, the Mount of Olives, the Kedron Valley, the garden of Gethsemane, etc. After having visited these places, the gospel readings of today come alive.

The people who welcomed Jesus on Palm Sunday would turn against him in just a matter of days. Their enthusiasm would give way to hostility. The shouts of “hosanna” would give way to the shouts of “crucify him.” The people who said “Blessed be the one who comes in the name of the Lord” will begin to say “Away with him, away with him!” The people who acclaimed Him as the “King of Israel” will say, “We have no king but Caesar.” The people who held tree branches welcoming Him on Palm Sunday will give Him a cross on Good Friday. The people who threw their cloaks on the ground for Him to walk on will strip Him of his clothes and cast lots. Why such a sharp turnabout in the people? Why such an inconsistency in the behavior of the people? Why such opposing reaction from the people? To find answers, we need to look into our own hearts.

Our faith in Christ demands faithfulness and perseverance. These are essential ingredients that sustain our faith and help it grow. Our faith is not just a bright light that sparkles for a moment and then fades away. On Good Friday, the crowd’s faithfulness and perseverance was tested. The disciples fled, and the people shouted “Crucify him, crucify him!” Our faithfulness and perseverance will be tested at some time in our lives as well. In fact it is being tested right now. We are living through very unusual times. We are living through challenging and difficult times. We cannot go to church as we are used to. We do not have the Eucharist. We do not have social gatherings. We do not have our favorite sporting events. We are experiencing a lot of stress. Many of us are suffering from cabin fever. Our freedom of movement is restricted. We are tested spiritually, emotionally, and economically.

This is the time to reaffirm our faithfulness and fidelity to Christ and His gospel. This is the time to show our love for God and love for our neighbor. Our faithfulness and loyalty to Christ and His church should be shown, not just when things go well in our lives, but also when things go not so well in our lives. God sends us tests, not to weaken us but to strengthen us. Our faithfulness to the call to be Christians and Disciples of Christ is to be shown not only on sunny days but also rainy days. Jesus said, “If any one wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Lk. 9:23). Let us take up our crosses of inconveniences, stresses, and frustrations and follow Christ as He makes His way to Calvary this week. Please know that I am praying for all of you, and that Jesus is walking with us.