

## 2025 B PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD 4/13

Palm Sunday, we enter the Holy week and contemplate Jesus' last week on earth and relive symbolically the three-day- long liturgy we call the *Triduum*. It all begins today with a procession re-enacting Jesus' exuberant entry mounted the colt of a donkey into the Holy City of Jerusalem.

It is a beautiful story. It is a story of great **humility**. On the other side of the city, Pilate was entering the city on a **great stallion**, while Jesus was riding into the city on a **young donkey**. Pilate was surrounded by a **security force of Roman soldiers bearing swords, shields and heavy armor**. Jesus entered the city surrounded by **unarmed peasants wearing palm branches**, the symbol of peace. Pilate's soldiers **sneered**; Jesus' followers **sang**, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" No greater contrast can be made between the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of God. **Brute force** versus **gentle peace**.

And yet, more than 2,000 years later the only reason we even know Pontius Pilate's name is that each time we say the Apostles' Creed, "He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and was buried ...". Ultimately gentle peace won out over brute force, as it will one day when the final chapter of humanity is written.

True humility is a beautiful thing to see in any person. The Indian evangelist Sundhar Singh was once asked: "Don't you think that all the honor that you get, harms you?" Sundhar's answer was: "No. The donkey went into Jerusalem, and they put garments on the ground in front of the donkey. The donkey was not proud. He knew it was not done to honor him but for Jesus, who was sitting on his back."

Sundhar Singh was a humble man just as his Lord came with humility that Palm Sunday. True humility is a beautiful thing to see.

It is clear on Palm Sunday, Jesus announced to the world that he was the **Messiah**. Some people welcomed him that day in Jerusalem hoping that he was the one who would deliver them from foreign rulers. The religious and the political leaders saw him as a threat to their established order and plotted to kill Jesus.

Now let us proceed to the Church to celebrate the passion of the Lord.

Someone has noted that the problem with palms is that once you cut the branches from the tree, they don't live long, and you know that. The problem with Palm Sunday is that the excitement of the crowd didn't last very long either. And a few short days later when Good Friday came, many of the same voices shouted "**Hosanna!**" were shouting "**Crucify Him!**" That's the way popular opinion often goes—fickle and unpredictable.

Long ago, I read an inspiring book: *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, written by Richard Back. It is about a "**Messiah**" in the world of seagulls. Jonathan shows the other seagulls that they live only limited portion of their potential. He shows them in his own flight and life what they really can do. The other gulls did not accept him. Jonathan was too much of a challenge and a danger to their set way of living. His influence over the young was considered dangerous, upsetting the established order. He gets punished and expelled. After a period of time, he comes back totally transformed into a magnificent creature and wins the hearts of many of his community and transforms them to live their potential. Jonathan's story is a fictional rerun of Jesus' life.

Do you really like to be challenged by Jesus who came to tell who you are and what you can do exploring your potential?

If you really like to do so, then get into the Passion story of Jesus Christ, and walk with him like Mary, the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdala, the other women, John the Beloved, Veronica, the Centurion, the good thief, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus. Or like the Apostles and the disciples who had an encounter with the Risen Lord and being empowered by the God's Spirit transformed the world.