

*“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”*

Today, as we gather on this solemn Palm Sunday, the Church invites us to reflect on a paradox - two contrasting moments that together form the heart of our faith: the royal welcome of Jesus into Jerusalem, and the deep suffering He endured for our sake. This day marks the beginning of Holy Week, a week in which we commemorate not just the death and resurrection of Jesus, but our own dying and rising in Him. Through these events, we are offered healing, reconciliation, and redemption. Our attentive participation in these liturgies will deepen our relationship with God, strengthen our faith, and guide us in living as true disciples of Christ.

As we reflect on the Scriptures today, we see both the glory and the suffering of Jesus. The first reading, from Isaiah, presents us with the prophecy of the suffering servant - a foreshadowing of Christ's mission and His sacrifice. The Responsorial Psalm, "My God, My God, why have You abandoned Me?" brings us into the very heart of Jesus' Passion, expressing His agony and abandonment. In the second reading, Paul's letter to the Philippians speaks of the humility of Christ, who "emptied Himself" to save us from sin and death. And then, in the Gospel, we participate in the dramatic scenes of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and His Passion, recalling the joy of His royal welcome and the sorrow of His suffering and death.

But today, we are not just bystanders. As we hear the Passion narrative, we are invited to examine our own lives in light of the characters in the story. We see Peter, who denied Jesus; Judas, who betrayed Him; Pilate, who acted against his conscience; and the leaders who sought to preserve their power by condemning Jesus. The question we must ask ourselves is: How do we relate to these figures? Do we see ourselves in them?

Now I would like to invite you to meditate on six important points;

1. Does Jesus weep over my sinful soul? Just as He wept over Jerusalem, does He weep over the hardness of my heart, my failure to repent and turn back to Him?
2. Am I a barren fig tree? Jesus expects us to bear the fruits of holiness - love, forgiveness, humility, justice, and charity. Are we producing these fruits in our lives, or do we continue to bear the bitter fruits of selfishness, pride, and sin?
3. Will Jesus need to cleanse my heart? Just as He drove out the money changers from the temple, does Jesus need to purify my heart from the things that defile it - selfishness, impurity, and uncharitable thoughts and actions?
4. Do I welcome Jesus into my heart? As we journey through Holy Week, are we ready to surrender our lives to Jesus, to allow Him to be our Lord and Savior in every area of our lives?
5. Am I like the humble donkey that carried Jesus? The donkey humbly carried Jesus into Jerusalem, a symbol of service and humility. Are we bringing Jesus' love, forgiveness, and service to those around us - our families, our workplaces, our communities?
6. Do I see myself in the characters of the Passion? Just as we see the failings of Peter, Judas, and others, we must ask: Am I like them in any way? Do I betray or deny Jesus through my actions, my choices, or my indifference?

These are challenging points or questions, but they are essential as we prepare to walk with Jesus through His Passion and into the glory of the Resurrection. Let us remember that we are all sinners who have, in a sense, crucified Jesus by our sins. Yet, through His suffering, He offers us forgiveness. "By His wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). Even when we fall, we are not abandoned, and we are always invited to turn back to Him in repentance.

This Holy Week, let us answer these questions with sincerity and humility. Let us welcome Jesus into our hearts, allow Him to cleanse us, and commit ourselves to living as true disciples, bringing His love and peace to the world around us.

May this Palm Sunday be the beginning of a deeper relationship with Christ, who suffered and died for our salvation, and who calls us to die to sin and rise with Him in new life.