



Bringing Home the Word

Palm Sunday (A)
April 5, 2020

Noble and Humble

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord prepares us to leave behind Jesus' public ministry and enter into his suffering and death. From miracles, crowds, and praise we move to pain, silence, and humility. Only the strong and true lovers of Jesus will make it to the foot of the cross.

A painting in the Vatican Museum by Pseudo Domenico di Michelino, *The Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem*, depicts Jesus coming into Jerusalem sitting

nobly—on a donkey—in the center. The prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 sets the scene and marks its importance: “Exult greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem! Behold: your king is coming to you, a just savior is he, humble, and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” By riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, Jesus embraces the path of the Messiah that God mapped out through the prophets. He comes as a king and in peace and obedience. Jesus wins with meekness and love.

Returning to the painting, we see little children laying down their coats before Jesus. These simple souls recognize his divine humility and honor him with their gestures while the crowd acclaims his kingship. The reign of Jesus incites praise, fidelity, and allegiance. The people wave olive branches and throw them on the ground before him.

Counting the followers in the painting, eleven process with golden halos around their heads. These symbols of holiness highlight the fact that to love Jesus is to follow him to the end, as do almost all of the twelve disciples Jesus selected to join him in his ministry. One follower, however, is surrounded in shadow. Unlike the others, he looks away. His heart is set on another plan. +

A Word from Pope Francis

Jesus enters Jerusalem. The liturgy...somehow expresses the contradictory feelings that we too, the men and women of today, experience: the capacity for great love, but also for great hatred; the capacity for courageous self-sacrifice, but also the ability to “wash our hands” at the right moment.

—Palm Sunday homily, March 25, 2018



Sunday Readings

Matthew 21:1–11

The very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and strewed them on the road.

Isaiah 50:4–7

The Lord God is my help, / therefore I am not disgraced.

Philippians 2:6–11

He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave [and]...humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Matthew 26:14–27:66 or 27:11–54

Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, and gave up his spirit.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How do I respond to Jesus' invitation to join him in his passion? do my actions show where my heart really is?
- Would I be shrouded in shadow or surrounded by Jesus' glory?

Jesus Christ, Our Starting Point

By Fr. Thomas Richstatter, OFM

Being Catholic starts with Jesus Christ. In fact, everything begins with Christ. He is “the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (Revelation 22:13). He is “the firstborn of all creation” (Colossians 1:15).

I wasn’t around before the creation, of course, but from my perspective I can imagine things happening something like this: God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—was sitting at breakfast when God the Father said, “Being God is wonderful, but eternity can sure get boring.” “So let’s do something different,” the Son replied. “Let’s create something out of nothing!” The Father asked, “Can we do that?” “Sure,” said the Spirit, “we’re God, aren’t we?” The Father said, “OK, what shall we make?”

And (this is the crucial point) what did God make? Jesus Christ—the firstborn of creation, the Word through whom God made everything else that exists.

If you are not accustomed to thinking of Jesus in this way, an analogy may help. Years ago when I was teaching at a seminary, one popular hobby among the students was making model airplanes. On winter evenings the hobby shop would be crowded with boys gluing together various shapes of balsa wood pinned to diagrams on a table.



When asked, “What are you making?” the seminarians never said, “I am gluing piece A7 to H5.” One might respond, “I am making a P-51 Mustang.” From the beginning, their minds were on the finished project. Similarly, if you asked God at the creation, “What are you making?” he would have responded: “We’re making Jesus Christ.”

God’s Masterpiece

Jesus is God’s masterpiece. God created Christ out of love, and Christ returned perfect love to God. We can see this in everything Jesus said and did while he walked on earth. We see this most clearly in Jesus humbling himself, “becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8). And on the cross “he handed over the spirit” (John 19:30) to the Church so that we who are baptized put on Christ and become his body.

At Mass we ask God to “grant that we, who are nourished by the Body and Blood of your Son and filled with his Holy Spirit, may become one body, one spirit in Christ.” Our incorporation into Christ is the principal petition at every Eucharist. We pray that we, to paraphrase St. Augustine, be what we see on the altar and receive what we are—Christ’s body. Through Christ, in him, with him, our lives have meaning. We live for more

than ourselves. We are taken up into that great, mysterious plan of God that is Jesus Christ.

God’s Coworkers

And what is our role in God’s plan? Our mission is reconciliation. While God has reconciled all things in Christ, “making peace by the blood of his cross” (Colossians 1:20), with our incorporation into Christ, God has “given us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18). We are to improve the quality of life for all, to alleviate hunger and disease, injustice and conflict.

And while this task may seem impossible, we Catholics know that it is possible. In fact, we know that it will be achieved because it is God’s plan. This is what gives us our inherent Catholic optimism. We are optimistic because we know that grace is more original than sin. God’s great plan of love did not start with Adam and Eve, the fruit, or the snake, but with Jesus. Everything starts with Jesus. +

PRAYER

Lord, you are the model of nonviolence and unconditional love. May your example inspire me to be a more loving and forgiving person in life.

—From *Mindful Meditations for Every Day of Lent and Easter*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

April 6–11

Monday of Holy Week: Is 42:1–7 / Jn 12:1–11

Tuesday of Holy Week:
Is 49:1–6 / Jn 13:21–33, 36–38

Wednesday of Holy Week:
Is 50:4–9a / Mt 26:14–25

Holy Thursday: Ex 12:1–8, 11–14 /
1 Cor 11:23–26 / Jn 13:1–15

Good Friday: Is 52:13–53:12 / Heb 4:14–16;
5:7–9 / Jn 18:1–19:42

Holy Saturday: Gn 1:1–2:2 or 1:1, 26–31a /
Gn 22:1–18 or 22:1–2, 9a, 10–13, 15–18 /
Ex 14:15–15:1 / Is 54:5–14 / Is 55:1–11 /
Bar 3:9–15, 32–4:4 / Ez 36:16–17a, 18–28 /
Rom 6:3–11 / Mt 28:1–10

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