

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD; Cycle – B; March 24th 2024
Mark 11:1-10; Isaiah 50:4-7; Philippines 2:6-11; Mark 14:1-72; 15:1-47

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

After listening to the lengthy Passion Narrative we don't need a long homily today; we have enough points for our reflection. Only in the 9th century Palm Sunday was introduced in the Church. Traditionally, Palm Sunday was dedicated to celebrating Christ's surprise entry into Jerusalem and Good Friday was dedicated to remembering Christ's Passion and death. But in 1970 the Palm Sunday was converted into Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord. Perhaps, one reason for this addition was that as Good Friday is a weekday very many people failed to attend the Good Friday Liturgy and thus missed the Passion Narrative. So this new introduction will give chance to the regular Sunday attendees. At the same time the importance of the triumphal entry of Jesus to Jerusalem was not reduced.

We have heard two readings from Mark, first one, the account of Jesus' Triumphal entry into Jerusalem and then the account of series of events which took place in the life of Jesus, starting from the Last Supper till his Crucifixion. The four evangelists dedicate maximum space to the Passion Narrative. Everything Jesus did and preached during his three years of public ministry is very important, but the events of his life from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday which we commemorate this coming week, are most important of all.

In the first part of the liturgy we commemorate the Triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem accompanied by a great crowd who welcomed him with palm branches and spreading their cloaks on his path. We use palm branches all over the world today based on the gospel of John chapter 12:13 where we read, **"They took palm branches and went out to meet him, and cried out: Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, the king of Israel."** The other three gospels don't mention about palm branches, but only tree branches. The four Evangelists are unanimous in mentioning that Jesus sat on a donkey or colt. We call this as the Triumphal entry of Jesus and in that case, why didn't he ride on a horse? It was the custom in Palestine that when the King went out for a battle he always rode the horse. But when he went out to visit his people during the time of peace he always rode a donkey. **In this incident two things are clear that Jesus presented himself to be the Messiah or King and also he entered Jerusalem as a symbol of peace.**

Today, even after 2000 years, Jesus is ruling over the hearts of millions of people as a King and also he is the symbol of peace. Modern man runs after many things looking

for peace, but forgetting Jesus, the author of peace. In his farewell speech to his disciples, Jesus offers peace to his disciples. He says, **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you” (John 14:27)**. Jesus says to the apostles that he gives them peace not the way the world gives them peace. For the world peace is nothing but the absence of conflicts and struggles. But Jesus does not promise the absence of conflicts rather he offers the courage and strength to fight against the conflicts and thus even among all those things, find peace. No power on earth can offer us a problem free life. But Jesus can give us the strength to handle the adverse situations and help us to remain calm.