

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF CHRIST; March 13th 2025

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

The celebration of Palm Sunday marks the beginning of the Holy Week and also it commemorates the triumphal entry of Jesus into the city of Jerusalem which eventually unfolds his Passion. As this triumphal entry, stands as a prelude to the Passion and Death of Jesus on the cross we are also asked to reflect on the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus. We heard in the gospel of Luke that Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey. It was the custom among the Israeli kings to use a horse when they went out for a war. Whereas, on peaceful days they rode on a donkey, visiting people in the area. And also Jesus' triumphal entry has roots in the Messianic prophecy of Zechariah who prophesied, **"Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion, shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem! See, your king shall come to you; a just savior is he, Meek, and riding on an ass."** (Zech 9: 9). Here Jesus presents himself to be the Prince of Peace, but different from the political king. We notice how the people were excited and overwhelmed in following Jesus with the shouts of Hosanna, spreading their cloaks and palm branches on his way. They proclaimed, **"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord"** (Luke 38).

Unfortunately, the people mistakenly believed that Jesus was going to Jerusalem to capture the power from the Roman regime and then to rule over Israel as a king. As things didn't go the way they expected they were totally disappointed, including the 12 disciples. Eventually, the shouts of Hosanna gave way to the cry of Crucify him! Crucify him!

Jesus' role as the Messiah is well predicted by Isaiah in his four Servant Songs which are spread in [Isaiah 42:1-4](#), [49:1-6](#), [50:4-9](#), and [52:13-53:12](#), and they describe the service, suffering, humiliation and exaltation of the "Servant of the Lord." The Servant Songs prefigure the Passion of Jesus who suffered mockery and humiliation; but victory at the end. Today we heard the third Servant Song of Isaiah where it is written about Jesus, **"I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard; my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting."** But Jesus was steadfast in his mission as a suffering Servant.

As we reflect on the triumphal entry of Jesus and later his Passion and Death we notice the ups and downs in the attitudes of the people and even the disciples. The crowd who shouted Hosanna could not persist with that long. Within a few days a big crowd cried out for the crucifixion of Jesus. Judas, the disciple, bluntly betrayed his Master for a few coins due to his frustration. For Jesus didn't come to his expectation. The very Peter who proclaimed Jesus, **"You are the Messiah"** could not hold on it a long time; because, Jesus didn't act according to his expectation. He denied Jesus to be his Master; but later

he repented. The rest of the disciples ran away for their lives except John. The pious women could not abandon Jesus; so they stood at the foot of the cross. The Roman Centurion, though very late admitted that Jesus was innocent. Thus we meet different characters with diverse attitudes during the Passion of Jesus. These people are the reflection of our own faith journey. At times with joy we shout Hosanna for Jesus. But the moment he fails to come up to our expectation we too join the crowd to cry, crucify him. But as followers of Jesus our faith and trust in Jesus should be firm; in other words they should not change according to expectations and dreams. The Passion of the Lord invites us to endure our suffering and trust in the plan of God for us. Finally the victory will be ours. Remember, we too have a mission to accomplish. But it is possible only with the help of God.