

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion
March 25, 2018 Year "B"

What does the Church expect of us this Passion Sunday, the traditional beginning of Holy Week? Does this feast mean something more to Christians than a recurring annual custom, of providing palms to be placed behind your crucifix, beautiful as that custom may be?

Jesus knew what was in store for him as he entered Jerusalem. We have been reading about these steps leading up to this morning all this past week in the daily cycle of readings. While we too know the outcome, it is painful, for Easter Sunday must be preceded by Good Friday.

Jesus comes today not as a political revolutionary, but as a spiritual leader, as the Lamb of Sacrifice. The pitfalls of making politics out to be the answer to all our problems are obvious. This has never been the case, and those who fall into this trap more than often end up extremely disappointed. In the long run, Jesus as 'spiritual leader' accomplished much more, namely our salvation, but truthfully at the time, it disappointed some.

Jesus came to transform our consciences, and such an inner transformation demands so much more of us than if he had come simply to overthrow oppressors. Jesus came to die for them—and also for us. Do we really see ourselves as complicit? Or do we still look somewhat askance at the authorities from 2000 years ago? Can we see ourselves in them?

Through the Cross, and only through the Cross, the gates of the Kingdom will be opened. If today then, we join with the jubilant crowd and shout our Hosanna to the Messiah, let us seriously remember that as Christians, we know only One Lord, one King, one Messiah, who was rejected by all—including us—and who alone knows and opens the path to the Kingdom.

In today's account from the Gospel of St. Mark, Jesus said to Peter: "Could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." Lord. Help us Lord to overcome our weaknesses, that the fervor of our faith this week might make up in some measure for the laxity so many other weeks. May this week above all weeks be different, and may we remain by your side Lord, on the road to Calvary.