

PALM OR PASSION SUNDAY, C  
THE KING ON A MISSION  
*"The Master needs it" (Lk. 19: 31, 34)*

***The Passion We Celebrate:*** The Sunday before Easter Triduum and Easter Sunday is called the Passion Sunday or the Palm Sunday. It is Passion Sunday because today, we read the Passion Narrative (Lk. 22: 14-23: 56), which ushers us into the contemplation of the mystery of the Last days of Jesus. The Church traditionally calls the week beginning today "Holy Week" because from today, we enter a more solemn time of the season of Lent. A time when Christ's life was laden with emotions of calmness, horror, sorrow, fear, pain, loneliness, anxiety, and exhaustion. A time when He was misunderstood, terrified, betrayed, humiliated, abandoned, tormented, and crucified. A time when His trust, love and faithfulness to the Father's will were put to the test. As Christians, we endeavour to open our hearts to absorb these emotional experiences of our Lord. This is the meaning of the Passion Sunday we celebrate and the Holy Week we are in.

***The Palm Sunday and Triumphal Entry:*** On this day, we celebrate the Palm Sunday and commemorate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. This was in fulfilment of the prophecy of Zechariah 9: 9: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem! For, see, your king is coming just and victorious. Humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." This prophecy captures the entire action of Jesus on this day, with all the trappings and details earlier prophesied as presented to us in the Gospel of Luke (19: 28-40). Jesus finally arrives at Jerusalem. This marks the beginning of a long journey which He began in Luke 9: 51 – "When the days drew near for Him to be received up, He set His face to go up to Jerusalem." Jerusalem is the city of destiny. The purpose of His Incarnation is to be accomplished in Jerusalem, and from it the Christian mission will extend to the "ends of the earth" (Acts 1: 8). Thus, this was a historical event coded with theological and eschatological significance. The triumphant entry into Jerusalem was a carefully pre-planned, courageous feat staged as a royal procession (Jn. 12: 12-19) with the crowd carrying palms, praising, and singing in a loud voice and spreading their garments on the road as Jesus strolled in on a donkey. It was a joyous and momentous event for the people, who were impressed with the person and deeds of Jesus. St. John confirms that: "The crowd that had been with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead bore witness" (Jn. 12: 17). But for Jesus, this was a journey to His fate to embrace His enemies, who would hand Him over to be tortured with heartless cruelty and condemn Him to the most excruciating manner of death, the crucifixion.

The crowd on Palm Sunday was a very mixed multitude: it was the time of Passover, which attracted visitors from various parts of the world to Jerusalem, the Jews returned from everywhere to be there for the festival. In some sense, Jesus presented Himself to the world as its King. It was an unmistakable claim to be the Messiah, God's Anointed King.

**What Kind of King is He:** Before Pilate, He will declare: "Yes, I am a King. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world" (Jn. 18: 37). But His kingship is not of this world. He is The Messiah, The Anointed One. Therefore, His kingly ways are not in any ways like the kings and royalties of this world. Whereas, Pilate sat on the horse, a symbol of war and power; Jesus sat on a colt, a foal of a donkey. It was a symbol of humility and nobility. He demonstrated by this act that He was a King who came in peace and love to encounter His enemies. He was the Messiah-King, Who, though possessing all, made Himself poor to make us rich. He conquers not by wars and conquests but by humble obedience and total self-surrendering to the Will of the Father. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC. 569) succinctly puts it: "Jesus went up to Jerusalem voluntarily, knowing well that there He would die a violent death because of the opposition of sinners (*cf. Hebrews 12: 3*)". Jesus' last trip was free, just as His death was both an expression of obedience to the Father and love for us all. As we join the crowd of Jerusalem today, let us carry our palms of peace and love to embrace our neighbours, the displaced immigrants, the broken hearted and the weaker ones among us. Let our "Hosanna" be our kind words to soothe, comfort and encourage one another to raise them from their anguish and struggles.

**This is Our Journey too:** Pope Benedict XVI explains the theological significance of this glorious day in this beautiful way:

*Just as the Lord entered the Holy City that day on a donkey, so too the Church saw Him coming again and again in the humble form of bread and wine. The Church greets the Lord in the Holy Eucharist as the one who is coming now, the one who has entered her midst. At the same time, she greets him as the one who continues to come, the one who leads us into His coming. As pilgrims, we go up to Him; as a pilgrim, He comes to us and takes us up with Him in His "ascent" to the Cross and Resurrection, to the definitive Jerusalem."*

As Jerusalem opens her gates to welcome the Messiah, unknown to her, so the Church opens her doors to welcome the Messiah she knows and adores. As the poor and the humble multitude sang His praises in gratitude for "all the mighty works that they had seen" Him do, so are we called to open our hearts to welcome our Lord and

to praise Him in gratitude for all the wonderful things He has done in our lives. We are invited to journey with Jesus into Jerusalem and be present with Him in His Passion and Death to share in the joy of His Resurrection. Ours is a journey of hope, a walk of witness and a response of love.

***The Master Needs Us:*** These words, spoken by Jesus and the disciples, “The Master needs it” (Lk. 19: 31. 34) strikes a chord the seeks deeper reflection as we journey with Jesus throughout this Holy Week. The Master or the Lord needed the colt to accomplish the Father’s Will. The Death of Jesus was not His end. He was raised to life. After His Ascension, He sent the Holy Spirit as the Agent to aid us in accomplishing the Mission, He gave us: “You shall be My witnesses ... to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1: 8). Today, as on the day of His entry into Jerusalem, The Master needs us to accomplish that Mission. He needs each of us to complete the work He came to do (Colossians 1: 24). He needs our hearts to be His dwelling (Revelations 3: 20). These inspiring words of St. Teresa of Avila are very apt:

*Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*

*no hands but yours; no feet but yours.*

*Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ  
must look out on the world.*

*Yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good.*

*Yours are the hands with which He is to bless His people*

***My dear friends,*** the Lord needs us just as we are. Let us offer ourselves to Him that He may use us to bring His light, love and peace to our world darkened by the multiplication of evils. With wars in Ukraine, Yemen, Syria; the persecutions in Nigeria, Pakistan, North Korea, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and many more and their attendant impact poverty and immigration flux, we are challenged individually, as a Church and nation to respond with Christ-like love. May God grant us the piety to pray for peace in our world and the grace embrace these ones who may need our love, support, and acceptance. Amen.