

Palm Sunday
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When [Jesus] entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred saying, 'Who is this?' (Matthew 21.10)

+ In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The words of the crowd that welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday we say together each mass, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest'. They rejoice in the Lord's coming just before his death, and we join in their praise here, just before Christ's body is broken.

This week, Holy Week, we follow Christ to Jerusalem—today in triumph, Friday in defeat, Saturday in sorrow, Sunday in glory—we follow

our Saviour to the cross, we go there with him. We follow Christ amidst the roaring crowd into the city, we follow Christ to the upper room, to the garden, but always heading towards that brutal, violent end.

This constitutes the centre of our worship, it is the story of every mass, it is the story of the whole of our lives. We are a people given life through death, united in this the greatest of all the world's tragedies.

We are the people celebrating the one who comes in the name of the Lord, shouting Hosannah, striding down the street singing, children smiling and waving palms, but all the while following Christ crucified, the cross held up in our midst. Waving our palm branches, but leaving this place carrying our palms in the shape of crosses, instruments of execution.

Shouting hosannah, but soon to watch and pray in the garden, soon to shout, 'crucify!'. We are the disciples, basking in the delight of being fawned over as they enter their holy city, and we are the disciples running away in fear—deserters—when the hype fades.

We have to own this. Holy Week is the summation of our entire life. The highest highs and the lowest lows of human existence are met this week. The goal, the end, is making it through the whole of it: not stopping with palm branches, not huddling forever in the upper room, not watching endlessly in the garden, not remaining deserters, or deniers, or betrayers, or mourners on Friday, or being absorbed in the darkness of the hell that is Holy Saturday.

Our end is Christ's end. Christ's destiny becomes our destiny—so 'Who is this?' Answering that question is what this week, and thus, life, is all about.

He is the prophet from Nazareth, comes the answer from the crowds at Christ's triumphal entry, and he is the blasphemer to the same in a few short days. He is the servant washing his friends' feet and the one betrayed by his friend. He is the the guilty to the mob, the innocent to Pilate, the assignment of the soldiers, the pitied by Simon of Cyrene, the Lord to the thief, the Son of God to the Centurion. He is the despised, rejected, the bruised; the child, the brother, the King; the criminal, the convicted, the betrayed — Who is this?

He is all of us—all of us embraced in God's perfect love. All of our sin, our selfishness, our brokenness

and sorrow, all of it finds a home here, in this crushed victim.

So we enter Holy Week with Jesus and we discover just who this Christ is. We discover who God is—the God who becomes God-forsaken that we might be embraced. We enter Holy Week and we find the whole of our selves there in the midst, and the whole of our selves—from palm branches to desertion to hammer in hand—accepted, embraced, and made new.

In Holy Week we are not only discovering who Jesus truly is, but who we are, or, at least, who we are meant to be, who we are becoming. We are discovering what it means to be the community, the family, not of any national pedigree or shared bloodline, but of a crucified and risen Saviour. So, 'Who is this?', yes, but inherent in that question is another one: 'Who are we?'

We enter into this holy, sacred week, to meet Jesus and to unite the whole of ourselves to him. So the invitation awaits us: meet Christ, our triumphal deliverer. Meet Christ our Servant at the table, and meet him in your fear, your anxiety, and your loneliness in the Garden. Meet Christ in your brokenness on the cross, in your darkness and despair in the tomb, and in the delight of all your joy as the Sun of Righteousness awakens us to new life in resurrection glory.

This week is our life and our salvation. So come and meet your Saviour, as our redemption draws ever nearer.