Palm Sunday Reflections

Dear brothers and sisters, this year we celebrate Palm Sunday in the context of a pandemic that has crippled the whole world. We gather to pray and to celebrate mass in our homes while churches live stream masses and as priests join their parish family in worship together. Let us enter this passion week with faith, trust and reliance on a God who loved us and brought life to us through his passion and death.

They took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" And Jesus found a young ass and sat upon it; as it is written, "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on an ass's colt!" (Jn 12:13-15). Today we commemorate Christ's entry into Jerusalem for the completion of the Paschal Mystery. AFTER FIVE WEEKS of preparation we now enter the climax of the Lenten season and what we call Holy Week. The events of Holy Week are much more about love and humility.

Palm Sunday or Passion Sunday recalls the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem as King. He gets a rapturous reception from the crowd who acclaim him with words “Holy, holy, holy…” In a few days’ time, the same triumphant Jesus will be reduced to a battered wreck of humanity, calling forth the words of Pilate: “Look, it is a human being!” On Palm Sunday, Jesus was carried into Jerusalem; In his Passion, he walked carrying his cross to Calvary. On Palm Sunday, a crowd lined the streets to praise our Lord; a crowd lined the way of the cross too. On Palm Sunday, the crowd took off their cloaks and laid them on the road to honor Jesus; before the cross, Jesus was stripped of his cloak. On Palm Sunday, everyone praised Jesus, calling out “Hosanna!” In his passion, Jesus was insulted, mocked, and laughed at and shouted, “crucify him”.

As long as Jesus fed the hungry, healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, worked miracles, he was popular. As long as the people saw him as a political messiah, they gave him a royal welcome. When Jesus emphasized that he was a king of love and peace, and not a conquering military hero, when he showed that he would rule through humble obedience, when he broke social and religious barriers, when he became a threat to the religious authority and political standing of some people, when he loved all people unconditionally and challenged people to do the same, when he called people to change… the cheering stopped. It turned to jeering. On the cross, Jesus became (literally) a broken man and a human failure.

This is true today as well, one who makes people feel good is popular. When one tries to translate ideals into reality, when one wants to change “feel good” to “do good”, when one challenges people to amend attitudes and action… the cheering stops.

As we go through this day and this week, let us look very carefully at Jesus our Savior and walk in his footsteps. If we are to be his disciples, he invites us to walk his way, to share his sufferings, to imitate his attitudes, to empty ourselves, to live in service for others – in short, to love others as he loves us. Let us pray in a special way today for the world, for our country and for all the people suffering in various ways due to the Pandemic and its impact in society. May God Bless and protect us all.