

## Reflection for Palm Sunday

We have spent a Lenten Season preparing for this moment and this week and now it has arrived. This Sunday is Palm Sunday, Passion Sunday, and with this celebration we enter into the most holy and sacred week of the year. A week that we have spent a Lenten Season preparing for has arrived. I am sure most of us would have pictured celebrating Palm Sunday in a very different way than we are this year.

It is normal to gather with family and friends in our Church for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on Palm Sunday receiving palms in Church and participating in the Gospel of the Passion. This year things are very different we are not able to gather together as a community and participate in the blessing of the Palms and the Gospel of the Passion. Instead we will be able to watch the celebration of the mass from the Parish website. Dropping by the Church and picking up blessed Palms on the Weekend of Palm Sunday and in the days following Palm Sunday.

The way we celebrate Palm Sunday this year seems to make this a very unique and challenging time. For many if not all of us we might agree that the time we are living in would seem to be unprecedented. But we can look back into the history of humanity, hundreds of years ago and see the challenges, different societies, nations and communities faced from war, famine and disease. In these times the faith filled continued to live the faith and trust in God. We can even look to the more recent past be it WW I, WWII, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the Gulf War in all these times of conflict the faith filled continued to live the faith and trust in God.

What we are struggling with today is not a war started by men, but it is a disease that is in all parts of the world and in our own state. In our struggle with Covid-19, some of us might think we are overreacting and others might think we are not doing enough. What we might be able to agree on is that the Covid-19 disease has changed the way all of us would have expected to celebrate Palm Sunday and Holy Week, and that we need to pray for the sick, healthcare workers and society as a whole. We can also turn to the distant and recent past and be inspired by the faithful who have gone before us. No matter what external challenges they were facing they found a way to continue to live the faith and trust in God.

This Palm Sunday may we be able to follow the example of our ancestors in faith. On this Sunday we embrace the Triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem where the crowds cried out *Hosanna in the highest. Blessed are you who have come to us so rich in love and mercy.* We also embrace the Last Supper, the institution of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Our Gospel reading ends with Jesus calling out from the cross on Golgotha *Eli, Eli, lema sabachhthani, which means My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* Jesus gave His life for our salvation and the forgiveness of sins.

The events of Palm Sunday that we celebrate are filled with extreme highs and extreme lows. This Sunday prepares us for the rest of the events of Holy Week climaxing with the celebration of the Paschal Triduum, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. Today and this week is filled with extremes, but at the end of the celebration, the end of the day and the end of the week we are reminded and can recall the profound and complete love that God has for us. In closing I wish you and your family a peaceful and prayerful Holy Week. May this Palm Sunday, even in this challenging time, remind us that God is with His people.