

Our Lenten Journey 6



## **What is the importance of seeing Palm Sunday as part of a journey?**

Luke's gospel makes it clear that Jesus is on a journey – physical and spiritual - “He set his face resolutely to Jerusalem” (Lk 9:51) It is a journey of ascent – “going up” as He himself often refers to it. Physically Jerusalem is higher and it is the end of His journey. But in a deeper sense he is “going up to the Father.” He would have prayed the psalms of ascent. (Psalms 120-134) We should also remember that Jesus saves in light of who he is and what he does.

## **What is the importance of the Entrance into Jerusalem?**

Jesus is entering Jerusalem as King. That is clear. The King has come to his city to find whether it will welcome him and what fruits it will show him. (cf the parable of the fig tree – the parables in Luke leading up to his entrance.) Entering on a donkey is humble but also the royal sign fulfilling Zechariah 9:9 and as his forerunner Solomon had done in 1 Kings 33-34 (vip) – there was no doubt this was the return of the king. Likewise the spreading of garments was a tradition of royal kingship and lastly their greeting “Hosanna! Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessings on the coming kingdom of our father David!” (Mk 11:9). Hosanna was a word that meant both a cry for help and a cry of rejoicing – finally the long awaited King has come to establish his kingdom. Absolutely true but not quite in the way they would have expected. His kingdom was of a different kind and had a different power. Also, he has also come to celebrate the Passover.

## **How should we understand the very important phrase Passover of the Lord?**

The word Passover has many meanings and they interlink: the Passover of the Israelites leaving Egypt – Our Lord is celebrating the passage from sin and slavery to freedom as children of God and instituting the Eucharist. Secondly, it became associated with the word “passion” and hence, it meant the passion and death of Our Lord. Thirdly, it means the passing of Jesus to the Father. He came down from heaven and now he is returning. It is his exodus – as he had discussed with Elijah and Moses at the transfiguration (Lk 9:31).

## **What is the importance of the phrase “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord?”**

As Pope Emeritus Benedict points out this greeting (Ps 118) from being one to greet the pilgrims acquired messianic significance; therefore, they are greeting Jesus as the one promised by God and therefore, they are rendering him praise and briefly he is accepted for who he is.

## **What does the phrase “the coming of the Lord” refer to?**

There are many important themes for Holy Week but one might be suggested that might pay great dividends in our understanding of this the greatest of weeks. Historically Our Lord entered the city: this was his coming as King and the Messiah – the city was not prepared and they rejected him. Following this rejection in AD 70, the city was visited by the Romans and destroyed, again they were unprepared and had not repented; but those who had converted to Christianity were saved since Our Lord had warned them of the signs when this was to happen (cf Mt 24). There is also going to be the final coming of Our Lord at the end of time and we do not know the hour of that “coming.”

## **What is the relevance of this phrase for us?**

However, we must remember that like Palm Sunday and like the end of time, we are visited by Jesus during our lives. He comes in different forms and we must be watchful and vigilant that we do not miss the time of our visitation by the Lord. How must we be watchful? Matthew (24:45-25:46) gives Our Lord’s advice in three parables and each time we hear that word “Watch”: we must be good stewards looking after what the Lord has entrusted to our care so that we are ready when he comes; we must be like the five prudent virgins who had oil in their lamps and who were prepared: the oil that we must have is the Holy Spirit within us who will make sure – if we listen – that we recognise our visitation. Finally, we must make good use of the talents that God has given us so that we can account for them at our judgement. But also Our Lord then goes on to tell us how we will recognise him and how to use our talents: we will see him in the naked, the thirsty, the hungry, those in prison. It is in helping these that will not only recognise him but use our talents wisely.

## **What is the connection between his coming, his presence and the Mass?**

Twice but both times significantly, Matthew uses the word *Perousia* which we translate “coming.” But it really means presence especially the presence of royalty. Hence Matthew is emphasising that Our Lord IS present. Pope Emeritus Benedict points out that this has a liturgical sense as well as one of kingship; hence Our Lord is truly present in the Liturgy, He becomes present during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It is here that we must recognise his presence. This is why just before the Eucharistic Prayer we sing Hosanna and blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. It is the recognition of his presence at mass and feeding on his body that enables us to be watchful and fruitful and enables us to discern his presence in our neighbour. For Mother Teresa could only minister to the poor because she recognised in them Christ and that recognition came from the mass, her meditation and the time spent in adoration.

This week Christ will institute the priesthood and the mass. He will suffer and die for us to redeem us; his resurrection will bring new life. But he asks only that we follow him. He wants us to help in the plan of redemption. Not just to conquer our faults but to redeem others. Our mission is his mission – his mission was redemption on the cross – let's welcome the cross and see in our sufferings and death an invitation to redeem the world. The cross is difficult but beautiful and gives meaning to everything. This is the wood of the cross on which hung the saviour of the world – come let us adore.....and we must add, and participate.

1. Do we acknowledge Christ as King? Are we ready to lay down our garments for him? This means ridding ourselves of everything that blinds us to his presence.
2. Are we vigilant? Our Lord during this week and in the Garden of Gethsemane warns us to be watchful. The only way we can avoid falling is vigilance, vigilance is staying awake and praying. Do we pray enough?
3. Are we prepared? Are we good stewards with what God has given us? Do we use our talents wisely? Do we practice good works – feeding the poor, visiting the sick etc?
4. Some interesting Scripture passages to read in this context: most importantly read Zechariah 9:9 and I Kg 1:33 to understand palm Sunday. Read the prophecies of the suffering servant and his kingship Isaiah 52:12-53:12. During the first part of Holy week follow Our Lord's teaching in the temple: From Mt 21:18 through to Chapter 26.

God bless and may He speed us on our way to Glory by conforming us to his son's passion,



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