

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD
Year B: Mk 11:1-10; Is 50:4-7; Ps 22; Phil 2:6-11; Mk 14:1—15:47
March 28, 2021
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It is surely one of the more difficult details of Our Lord's Passion that, although He was hailed by the crowds with joy when He triumphantly and peacefully entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, it was only a few days later that the crowds cried out demanding His death. Some Scripture scholars say that they were different crowds – the one which cried out, "*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*", and then those who cried out, "*Crucify him!*" But, even if this is true, there is no denying the painful fact that the mood in Jerusalem changed quickly from one of joyful acceptance of Christ at the beginning of the week, to one of hateful and malicious rejection of Christ by the end of the week. And yet, as we know, Our Lord did not let this stop Him or lessen His determination to redeem us.

Some may find it odd that the Church reads the narrative of Our Lord's Passion on this celebration of Palm Sunday. Shouldn't we be focusing on Christ's joyful entrance into Jerusalem, and why fast-forward to the sad events of Good Friday? Well, many people don't attend the service of Our Lord's Passion on Good Friday, when there is no obligation to attend, as there is on Palm Sunday, in an ordinary year. So, if we did not recall the Passion today, the next time most would come to church would be on Easter, when we would celebrate the Resurrection, without having observed what Christ endured for us.

But even for those who attend on Good Friday to commemorate the Lord's sorrowful Passion and death, the Church knows it is good to begin this most Holy Week of the year by considering what Christ suffered for us and for our salvation. Remembering the Passion, from the very beginning of this week, will help us to appreciate the dramatic events that unfolded during that first Holy Week, when the world was redeemed. In fact, for those who observe and relive the events of Holy Week, there is a certain mood and atmosphere in the air throughout the days of this week – a sense of foreboding, followed by an agonizing sorrow that usually leaves us in silence. By a pious tradition, many people keep silent and refuse to speak from noon until 3:00 on Good Friday, to mark the hours that Christ hung on the Cross.

However we are able to observe the Lord's Passion, we should not be unaffected by this coming Holy Week. We should not let it pass without bringing about some change in us – perhaps a deeper appreciation of Christ's heroic love, a deeper conversion away from sin, or a deeper commitment to honor Christ by loving others. If we desire it, and if we allow it, we can ask the Lord to sanctify our souls, as we commemorate His Paschal Mystery that opened the floodgates of God's mercy into the world and brought us new life.