

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD
Year C: Lk 19:28-40; Is 50:4-7; Ps 22; Phil 2:6-11; Lk 22:14 - 23:56
April 10, 2022
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On this Palm Sunday, which begins the holiest week in the year on the Church's calendar, we recall how Our Lord Jesus entered Jerusalem in a climate of great excitement and anticipation. As He entered the city, riding on a colt, "*the people were spreading their cloaks on the road; and ... his disciples began to praise God aloud with joy for all the mighty deeds they had seen. They proclaimed: 'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest'*" (Lk 19:36-38).

We should try to imagine what the crowds thought might happen when Jesus entered Jerusalem. He had been preaching in Galilee and the surrounding towns, but now He was coming into the great city of the Jewish People, and the crowd of His followers hailed Him as a king. They must have expected some great event that would establish Jesus as a ruler and would change the situation in Jerusalem and in all of Israel.

It's interesting to consider that nothing earth-shattering happened that day. The Gospel tells us that Jesus did go into the Temple and caused a bit of a ruckus, by driving out the people who were selling things and turning His Father's house into a marketplace (cf. Lk 19:45). But St. Matthew's Gospel tells us that He then left Jerusalem and "*went out of the city to Bethany, and there he spent the night*" (Mt 21:17). So, the people who were expecting something major to happen that day may have been disappointed.

But, of course, as we just heard in the reading of the Passion, what *did* happen as a result of Christ's entry into Jerusalem was His eventual suffering and death at the end of the week. And Jesus knew this would happen. He knew that when He entered Jerusalem it would trigger a whole series of events that would lead to His death. And He also knew that this was why He had been born and sent into the world. He knew that God the Father had decreed His death to be the way the world would be redeemed. He had repeatedly told His disciples that this would happen. He told them, "*The Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised*" (Lk 9:22). And, the Gospel tells us that "*[w]hen the days for his being taken up were fulfilled, he resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem*" (Lk 9:51). He was not reluctant. He was determined.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, He knew that He was nearing the end of His mission and the end of His life. And He did not let the fear of death deter Him from completing the work He was sent to do. We know that the terribly sad and tragic events of Holy Week will ultimately lead to the great joy of Easter Sunday. But for now, as we recall His entrance into Jerusalem, we feel an obligation to focus on His Passion, so that we can honor Our Lord for His determination to redeem us.