

APRIL 2, 2023: PALM SUNDAY



As a child, one of my favorite memories of Palm Sunday were the palm branches. My brothers and I would use them as weapons against each other during Mass. (No... I was never a perfect child. 😊) And the important thing when fighting with the palm branches was *not* to get caught by our mom. She was not happy with us when we did this, and she noticed! The best thing was to annoy your brother enough that he hit you first and mom saw it. He would get in trouble, and you didn't. For me, getting the palm branches was one of the best times of the year.

Obviously, this was not the purpose of the palm branches. They are intended to be a way to glorify Jesus. The scriptures we hear today remind us of what happened as Jesus entered Jerusalem. "The very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and strewed them on the road. The crowds preceding Him and those following kept crying out and saying: 'Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest.'"

Palm Sunday begins our journey of Holy Week—the most important week of the year. During this week we are called to focus even more intensely on the life of Christ and on the life we are currently living. It is a time to ask ourselves if our lives truly give glory to Jesus. Are we throwing down palm branches before Him or are we using them as weapons? Do we cry out with full voice, "Hosanna in the highest"?

The palm branches that God cares about are clearly *not* the little branches we have in our hands—which we will probably forget about quickly. Rather, it is about the gifts that God has given each of us to build up his kingdom in the world. It is about living a life that will lead others to Christ. It is about recognizing that all the good we have in our lives did not come from our hard work, but rather, from God; their purpose is to enable us to give proper glory to Him through Christ-centered lives.

But many times we use our God-given gifts in ways that God did not intend. In a real sense we turn them into weapons to be used against others, or even ourselves. We look only to the benefits we can gain and what we believe we can achieve through their use. God is not part of the equation when we consider what his gifts truly mean to our lives. Holy Week is a time to stop and ponder the true meaning of our life.

It is discovered *not* in lofty ideas and pithy turns of phrase. Rather, it is discovered in looking to the life of a poor, itinerant Jewish preacher who lived 2000 years ago. His words have echoed down through the centuries because He lived what He preached. His life was about one thing only—fulfilling the will of his Father in order to glorify the Father. His was not a self-centered life, but one that fulfilled the commands of the Father and the needs of the people. He lived out the truth for He was the truth. He told us as much, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." The truth is *not* a set of ideals: rather, the truth is being in relationship with Jesus. And we come to glorify Him when we choose to make that relationship the foundation of our life and how we live our life.

Jesus came to give us the truth, live the truth, and be the truth in order that we might learn how to truly live. "For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish, but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."

Christ came for one reason only, and it was *not* to make us feel good about ourselves. Rather, He came to make salvation possible for us through his death and resurrection. This Holy Week is *not* about palm branches, foot washing, or reverencing a cross. All those actions are intended to be reminders of what Christ encountered to win our salvation. May we be willing to lay down the branches of our lives before Christ, and seek to glorify Him by living the life He modeled for us. It was a life of simply seeking to live in accord with God's commands and to look out for what is best for the other. May we desire to live out the truth that is Christ. May we desire to live a Christ-centered life.

Wishing you all the blessings of this Holy Week.

If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to ask me directly, or send your questions to me at fr.brian@theholyrood.org , or if easier please call or text me at (978) 254-0560.

Please keep me in your prayers.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Fr. Brian".

Fr. Brian