

Living the Word: Isaiah 50.4-9a

This servant, who has obviously been punished, is certainly aware of God's redemptive powers. The Lord God helps even the person who has been so far turned aside from him. For those who would sing the Lord's praises on his entrance, would be the same people who would scream for his blood later in the week. And the Lord loves each of these, just as he loves each of us. And he who vindicates us is near. The Lord's coming is indeed near, and just as we are praising his entrance to Jerusalem today, we must ever keep in mind that he knows what this entrance precedes. The repetition in this particular passage demonstrates the number of times that we turn from God and the number of times he forgives us. How important for us to hold onto that during the coming week.

Elements of the Mass: Processions

The Procession on Palm Sunday represents our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, and as such is distinct from the Mass which follows, which commemorates the Passion itself. The account of the fourth century Holy Land pilgrim, Egeria, includes a procession into Jerusalem, and texts from the eighth century in the West would seem to suggest that a procession had become the normal on this day. In the Middle Ages, the procession often set out from one church and went to another, where the palms were blessed and distributed, before returning to the church from which it came. Sometimes the Blessed Sacrament was carried in procession, a French custom which spread to England at the end of the 11th century. The procession was abolished in the Church of England at the Reformation, but made a comeback in the twentieth century, largely following modern Roman Catholic practice: away from the church building, palms or other greenery are blessed, followed by a reading of one of the Gospel accounts of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and then the procession itself into the church, often whilst singing 'All Glory, Laud and Honour'.

Collect

Almighty ever-living God, who as an example of humility for the human race to follow caused our Saviour to take flesh and submit to the Cross, graciously grant that we may heed his lesson of patient suffering, and so merit a share in his Resurrection. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

24th March 2024
Palm Sunday



Jesus finally arrives in Jerusalem, and receives a Messiah's welcome: palm branches, songs of joy which we echo in our worship, a huge outpouring of expectation and a sense of fulfilment is in the air. It is impossible to imagine at this distance that within five days he will be executed as the most cursed of all common criminals. Perhaps this morning we too will hold palm crosses in our hands, and walk in procession with Jesus at the beginning of this Holy Week. The journey continues, for us as for Jesus, to the very heart of the city, where the fallout from his presence unfolds – the plotting, the manoeuvring and the squalid deals that are to bring our Saviour to a dreadful death. How difficult this week is, for Christians everywhere! But follow him we must, if we are to receive from him the gift of abundant and eternal life.

Today's Gospel: The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to St. Mark