

Homily for Palm Sunday

The first Gospel we heard today at the beginning of Mass shows us Jesus, seated on a donkey, entering Jerusalem to the shouts of acclamation: “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest.” (In case you ever wondered what the word ‘hosanna’ meant, it means “please save” – a cry for salvation). Well today, there are lots of hosannas and cries of joy to go around for Jesus!

But, I’m constantly amazed at the reality of the situation at hand: Jesus rides into Jerusalem in triumph, only to be crucified just five days later! To put this into context, imagine yourself at some important moment of your life where lots of family and friends are all gathered around you to support you in love – perhaps at your wedding or on your graduation day. Now imagine looking out at that same beloved crowd, and see them making faces at you, and shouting out all types of hurtful slurs. Imagine such a slap in the face and a kick in the stomach, and you are imagining a bit of what it must have been like for Jesus. What fortitude, what courage it must have taken for Him to go in to Jerusalem knowing the outcome on the way out!

And the only way this could possibly make sense or even be bearable at all, was the reason Our Lord was doing it – love. St. Paul tells us that there are lots of gifts, both human and divine, but above all these, he says, “put on love, that is the bond of perfection.” Love is what enables one to do heroic things for another, whatever the situation might be – love.

Our Savior loved us with such a perfect love that He wanted to united Himself with us perfectly – in life and in death. And because of this love, He continues to desire a truly personal relationship with us so much – a relationship beyond mere commands and obligations and requirements. A relationship built on the perfect bond of love – which puts the other first, whatever the situation might be.

And so, as we now enter into Holy Week, may we discover this love ever more deeply in the depths of the heart of Jesus. And there, may we always live and find salvation and peace! God bless you.