

Palm Sunday

A Prayer to Begin Holy Week

Assist us mercifully with your help, O Lord God of our salvation,
that we may enter with joy upon the contemplation of those mighty acts,
whereby you have given us life and immortality; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

- The Book of Common Prayer

Opening Sentence

All glory, laud, and honor to thee, Redeemer, King!
To whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.

-Theodulph of Orleans d.821 (trans. John Mason Neale)

Song of Praise

Open for me the gates of righteousness;
I will enter them; I will offer thanks to the LORD.
"This is the gate of the LORD; he who is righteous may enter."
I will give thanks to you, for you answered me
and have become my salvation.

The same stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

This is the LORD'S doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

On this day the LORD has acted; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

Hosanna, LORD, hosanna! LORD, send us now success.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; we bless you from the house of the LORD.

God is the LORD; he has shined upon us;

form a procession with branches up to the horns of the altar.

-Psalm 118:19-27



Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.

-Psalm 24:7

Art: Entry into Jerusalem

Pietro Lorenzetti c.1320, details



Reading from Scripture

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, "Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey." The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee." - Matthew 21:1-11

Meditation 1

An extra company of Roman soldiers rides through the gates of Jerusalem on magnificent horses alongside uniformed infantry with gleaming weapons - an ostentatious a show of strength to control crowds coming to the city to observe the Passover. Meanwhile at another gate, a man humbly rides in on an ass, its foal along side, and a rather motley crowd spontaneously gathers. What is he doing? Why draw attention to himself in these dangerous times? What is it about this man, this prophet from Nazareth in Galilee that evokes a feeling of "turmoil" in the city? What will happen as these opposing powers meet - oppression and freedom, war and peace, fear and love? -sg

Imagine that Jerusalem is your own heart, your own walled city "in turmoil." How do you reconcile the powers competing within you?

Meditation 2

Let us go together to meet Christ on the Mount of Olives. Today he returns from Bethany and proceeds of his own free will toward his holy and blessed passion, to consummate the mystery of our salvation. ...So let us spread before his feet, not garments or soulless olive branches, which delight the eye for a few hours and then wither, but ourselves, clothed in his grace, or rather, clothed completely in him. ... [We] must ourselves be the garments that we spread before him. ... Let us present the conqueror of death, not with mere branches of palms but with the real rewards of his victory. Let our souls take the place of the welcoming branches as we join today in the children's holy song: 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the king of Israel.' -Andrew of Crete c.660-740

The crowds offered their cloaks, olive and palm branches to lay at the feet of Jesus as he rode into Jerusalem. At this moment as you pray, can you offer your soul, your life, your virtues, your weaknesses, your courage, your fear, your good deeds, your failings - your very self – at the feet of Jesus, as a garment of your life clothed in grace?

Personal Prayer: Intercessions, Petitions, Thanksgivings

Closing Prayer

As we enter Holy Week, help us to walk the way of the Passion with courage, truth, and openness to a radical change of heart. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen