

Homily - Palm Sunday (B)

Writing in his commentary on the Gospel of Mark, Saint Bede the Venerable, the great Doctor of the Church, speaks to the heart of the drama we experience this Palm Sunday.

“Now, [Christ] comes to Jerusalem to suffer, He does not shun those who call Him king, that He might openly teach them that He was King over an empire not temporal and earthly, but everlasting in the heavens, and that the path to this kingdom was through contempt of death.”

This climactic entry into the city of Jerusalem begins the final stages of the Lord’s mission, and sets the stage for the Passion that we have just heard unfolded in the Gospel, and which we will experience in full in the coming days of Holy Week.

He is no longer hiding. Quite the opposite.

Jesus is confronting death itself on his own terms, and faces the indignity of the Cross with the knowledge that he will be raised up and glorified, and all the Church with him.

Our own journey of Holy Week will likely carry us through the spiritual highs and lows that mark this same liturgy.

We may realize how often our own enthusiasm and joy has faltered and left us among the crowds who cried out for Our Lord’s crucifixion.

But in his weakness and suffering, amid all the pain and humiliation of the Cross, he prayed for us.

He held us in his heart.

He loved us throughout the agony, until the moment he drew his final breath.

In these sacred days, it is so important, all the more important than any other time, that we realize how deeply personal this experience is for each of us.

We are invited to pray through these liturgies, especially the holy days of the Triduum, first as a single united Body as the Church, but also as individuals, each of us contemplating and experiencing the Lord's merciful love.

In the days to come, we will witness the consecration of the Church's first presbyters, the consecration of Our Lord's Body and Blood in the Last Supper, and follow the painful steps of the Passion, all the way to Golgotha, the tomb, and beyond.

This is a time to be silent, to set aside as much of the busyness and noise of everyday life as possible, and to enter into the mystery that will lead us to the dawn of Easter.

Together we begin that meditation now, and reflect in silence on the love, the glory, and the cost of the sacrifice that was made for us that day - on Calvary.