

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is to come! Hosanna in the highest!” Mark 11:9

In today's Liturgy we face quite a contrast of experiences and emotions. We begin our celebration listening to the story of Jesus being welcomed into Jerusalem with great joy and exultation! “Hosanna!” they cried out. “Hosanna in the Highest!” Jesus was treated as He should have been treated. People were excited to see Him and there was much excitement.

But this excitement quickly turned to shock as we enter more deeply into today's readings. The Gospel culminates with Jesus hanging on the Cross crying out “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” And with that, “Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.” At that moment the entire congregation kneels in silence as we ponder the reality of Christ's death.

How things can change in one short week. What happened to all the people who were shouting and praising Him as He entered into Jerusalem? How could they allow Him to enter into this Crucifixion and death?

The deepest answer to this question is one that we may not expect. The answer is that the Father willed it. The Father willed, by His permissive will, that so many would turn on Him, abandon Him and allow Him to be crucified. This is so very important to understand.

At any time during that first Holy Week, Jesus could have exercised His divine power and refused to embrace His Cross. But He didn't. Instead, He willingly walked through this week anticipating and embracing the

suffering and rejection He received. He embraced this week willingly, choosing it as His own will.

Why would He do such a thing? Why would He choose suffering and death? Because in the Father's perfect wisdom, this suffering and death was for a greater purpose. God chose to confound the wisdom of the world by using His own suffering and Crucifixion as the perfect means of our holiness. In this act, He transformed the greatest evil into the greatest good. Now, as a result of our faith in this act, the crucifix hangs centrally in our churches and in our homes as a constant reminder that not even the greatest of evils can overcome the power, wisdom and love of God. God is more powerful than death itself and God has the final victory even when all seems lost.

Let this week give you divine hope. So often we can be tempted toward discouragement and, even worse, we can be tempted toward despair. But all is not lost for us either. Nothing can ultimately steal away our joy unless we let it. No hardship, no burden and no cross can conquer us if we remain steadfast in Christ Jesus letting Him transform all we endure in life by His glorious embrace of His own Cross.

Lord, when I am tempted to despair, give me hope. Help me to see your presence in all things, even in those things that are most troubling to me. May this Holy Week transform my darkest moments and weakness as I surrender all to You, my God. Jesus, I trust in You.

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