

PALM SUNDAY 2015

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER JOHN ALTBERG

ZECARIAH 9.9 MATTHEW 21.1 27.1



LET US GO FORTH IN PEACE...THE INTONED COMMENCEMENT OF OUR PALM SUNDAY PROCESSION JUST A FEW MINUTES AGO...

During the 2000+ years since Palm Sunday Processions began, things have changed quite a bit...more organized at the bare minimum!

The **founding** Palm Sunday 'Processors' were likely more a noisy, rag-tag band of stragglers...kind of a 'pick-up' demonstration often typifying Passover Week in Jerusalem...several likely joined in and then asked where exactly are we going...what is this all about...? Familiar questions yet today...

Early in Lent I received a 'church-quip' email from a close friend saying "hey Father John, maybe you can use this in a sermon...so with thanks to Bob, here's the story..."

A young man stayed home from church one Sunday...his family returned carrying palms...what are those all about he quizzed...well, said his smug sister, it's Palm Sunday and Jesus showed up on this day. Wouldn't you know, the one Sunday I don't go to Mass and He shows up...!

Well now, that does contain a kernel of wisdom doesn't it...? If we want to know what's going on, we have to show up...the more we show up, the more we learn...

And, yes-key questions always emerge around Palm Sunday and Holy week...among the most common...

- Why were Jesus and his group going to Jerusalem...?
- What is Passover all about...?

Jesus, by now, riding on the donkey acquired along the way from Nazareth...might easily have answered...

- To learn more about and thank God the Father, for sparing our ancestors from death...and to do the same for you.

While they could not have understood what that meant, we now can...IF we show up and pay attention...!

Like those folk on the long trek from Galilee to Jerusalem we picked things up along the Lenten Way...new information, previously not considered...if we listened to and absorbed new and useful perspectives that can change lives for the better...Jesus told them more about himself...

Our path did not involve a 70 mile trek but it did involve 'mental' travel...if we chose commitment to travel through the weeks of Pre-Lent and Lent with extra focus on learning new things...all coalesce to teach why we are here...if we have ears to hear...

Today, in our Procession of the Palms...just as did Jesus, in an increasingly public and visible way...we signed on as orthodox Catholic followers of Jesus...yes...in a public way, for our presence here does not hide our commitment.

This year we have spent five Lenten Weeks preparing for today...extra study and reconsideration of things we have long known but often become hazy in a year's time. Lent is the Church's way, like Saint Joseph of being our 'quiet' parent, caring and persistently reminding things we need to make life stable, sensible...and better...!

Palm Sunday is marked by contrasting Gospel readings...Jesus enters Jerusalem to cheering crowds...many join...life is hopeful. Then that same crowd turns ugly...becomes a mob...mobs are disorderly...lose control of themselves...unduly influence others and, perhaps unwittingly, incite disaster.

Palm Sunday is a depiction of ultimate contrasts...Jesus is hailed...then subjected to manipulated hatred. He is executed by the altered opinion of the very SAME people who joined with him...then becomes an unruly, mob...disorder seizes the end of the week commenced with a celebratory crowd having recognized God's great gift...then, the crowd turned mob, demanded the gift be destroyed. No, they would likely never have imagined themselves doing such a thing...likely swayed by noisy opinions of a few...that's how mobs get their start...then comes destruction...

Now...we are called to a key decision...when we were baptized we promised to follow Jesus. Are we willing keep our promise...**Go Visibly Forth in Peace**, with thanks and hopefulness to Jerusalem...?

