

PALM SUNDAY 2016
SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
FATHER JOHN ALTBERG
ZECHARIAH 9.9 MATTHEW 21.1 27.1

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LET US GO FORTH IN PEACE...WORDS WITH WHICH PALM SUNDAY COMMENCED ARE MUCH MORE THAN A CONVENIENT SLOGAN TO LAUNCH HOLY WEEK - THEY DEFINE PURPOSE...

Why do we have Holy Week and where, in fact does this 'process' take us...?

Those in the **founding** Palm Sunday Procession might have posed this series of questions 2000 years ago...

The leader of the procession, Jesus from Nazareth...could easily have answered...

- To Jerusalem...for Passover...
- To celebrate God having spared our ancestors from death...do the same for you...

Likewise, our process – PROCESSION – is about the very same thing...for those who elect committed participation, is about being spared from death...ultimate perfection, and eternal life

OUR Palm Sunday Procession really began as always, on Advent Sunday does...yes, it does...though we tend to forget; **Procession with Lessons and Carols...4PM on Advent Sunday**...remember...? Key terms...**Lessons + Carols**. Holy Scripture and song is carefully woven to enable clarity around our Jewish heritage – without which Christianity makes no sense whatsoever.

The folk on the 7-10 day trek from Galilee to Jerusalem acquired new information...if they listened, to what Jesus had say, useful perspectives - information that would change their lives for the better...Jesus told them more about himself...

If we take to heart our personal processions commencing on Advent Sunday, we pick up new information...information that can make our lives better...easier for ourselves, for those around us and for our parish.

Our path did not involve a 70 mile trek but it did involve travel...if we chose commitment to travel through the nearly 10 weeks of Pre-Lent and Lent with extra focus on *A Process of Redemption* through giving life to **The Procession**. **The Lessons**, written for our learning, and **the Carols**, give musical voice to what we read and hear...a coalescence to

teach why we are here - if we have ears to hear...

The Procession brought Jesus to full public disclosure. In the same way we signed on as orthodox Catholic followers of Jesus...yes - in a public way - our presence does not hide our commitment.

Five Lenten Weeks have thus far been spent in additional consideration of our commitment - things known often become hazy in a year's time. Lent is the Church's way of being our 'reminder parent'...not in a nagging manner...simply reminding us of things we need to make life stable, sensible...and better...! Now about that matter of **COMMITMENT**...it's one of two important **"C"** words of Palm Sunday...the other...

CROWD – a time of choosing where we stand...civility and incivility are the options.

Today is marked by dramatically contrasting Gospel readings...as we heard on Advent Sunday and again today, Jesus the surprise King enters Jerusalem to cheering crowds...many join the Procession...life is hopeful. Part of that same crowd turns ugly and becomes a mob. Mob rule is by definition, disorderly...people lose control of themselves...they unduly influence others, perhaps unwittingly, incite disorder.

Palm Sunday is the depiction of ultimate contrasts...Jesus is cheered...then subjected to manipulated hatred. He is executed by the altered opinion of the very SAME people who joined the positive Procession only days before. Jesus became an inconvenience. The celebratory crowd having recognized their long awaited great gift demanded the gift be destroyed. No, they would never have imagined themselves doing such a thing...swayed by noisy opinions of a few they made a deadly choice...then came destruction...

Finally...we are called to a key decision...we joined **The Procession**...not just today, but when we were baptized...are we willing to stay with the positive procession...seek the 'Heaven Crowd' of All Saints' Day...?

Holy Week is decision time. Are we willing, with public courage, to fulfill the promise made at our baptism – to follow Jesus...?

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