

Palm Sunday Passion Sunday 2008

We began our celebration by recalling the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (Matthew 21): cloaks and palm branches covering His pathway...

“Hosanna to the king of David”

We also read the Passion of Jesus (Matthew 26-27).

With these accounts, Holy Week opens.

Towards the end of Holy Week, we will again read the Passion (according to John).

These days, we will be enveloped by this unique journey of the God-man, the Christ.

Holy Week *is* this unique journey, in which we participate.

We are not simply spectators.

Reading and re-reading these accounts is not only momentous, but *relevant*.

They reveal

- how we are loved
- how Jesus is King

and, through them, *in faith*, we encounter the Messiah, *our* Messiah.

Jesus is King *in laying down His life* for us.

He comes to reign with love and mercy,

[“no greater love has a person than to lay down his life for his friends”]

He comes *not* to reign by “lording it over us.”

He comes to reign from within, not from without.

He comes to reign *in our hearts*.

And, in order to do so, Jesus suffers and dies.

Why would He do this? It *seems* like such a waste.

Real kings do not die.

They occasionally are killed – *as they battle bravely*, but...

Jesus does not battle, and He seems simply resigned to wilting in the assault on Him.

Jesus dies

- *in order to become* king...
- so to be victorious over our suffering and dying

Through all that Jesus experiences,

- which He chooses beforehand
- which HE chooses to let happen

Jesus loves.

In suffering and dying, Jesus is thus able to reach into the *depths* of our heart.

Along the journey to His death, Jesus takes upon Himself, i.e. *suffers*, the various things that “kill” the human heart:

- betrayal
- abandonment
- slander
- mockery
- denial
- rejection

Jesus endures *everything* that normally stops love so that *nothing* stop love, *divine* love. He indeed wishes to reign completely and freely, as is fitting.

The love with which He suffers and dies is infinite and everlasting and victorious.

- *This* is what we celebrate.
- *This* is what reaches us.
- *This* is what makes the Passion salvific.
- *This* is what causes Him to rise from the dead.

As we each cling to a palm, let us lay down our lives on the pathway as Jesus comes to us (in particular, in and through the Eucharist).

As we each cling to a palm, we, in fact, say to Jesus:

“You are my King and Messiah. It is you whom I want.
I want there only to be love and light in my life.
Please reign in my heart.”