

The Homily for the Palm Sunday

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be now and always acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer.

Epistle: Philippians 2:5-11; Gospel: Matthew 27: 1-54

“Hail, King of the Jews.”

Read in context of our gospel passage, these are mocking or sadistic and insulting words, meant to injure another person’s character, not well-meant, and pronounced by evil soldiers serving the interests of the Governor, Pontius Pilate.

The words are proclaimed in today’s Gospel of Matthew 27:29.

To rub salt into the wound, we see in the same passage how the soldiers kneel before the one they describe as “King”; we see how they “weave a crown out of thorns”; we see how they place the crown on his head. All humiliating and degrading stuff.

As if that were not enough, the soldiers strips him of his cloak; half-naked, they lead him to the slaughter-house of crucifixion (v31). It is all gory and ugly and sadistic.

But today there is nothing ‘gory’; it is Palm Sunday, and in the midst of Lent, we mark the beginning of Holy Week. Today is a day whose events in Jerusalem stand in sharp contrast with the Gospel passage we have just proclaimed.

Palm Sunday is about jubilation; dancing; and the triumphant entry of Jesus Christ into the Royal City of Jerusalem. Elsewhere in the Gospel of Matthew, Luke and Mark, the Gospel writers give a description of how the King, mounted on a donkey and in humility, descended on Jerusalem in victory, recognised by the many who spread leafy branches in honour of Davidic lineage.

Why the king? Christ is the king of the Kingdom; the King of eternal life, for the Kingdom equates with eternal life in Christ.

And to Nicodemus, for instance (John 3:1-13), this King says, “*You must be born anew*”; “*you must be born from above*”.

To be born again, or from above, is to embrace the Kingdom; to embrace the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; the news that reminds us that Jesus Christ comes to us in humility, and in the words of St Paul in his letter to the Philippians, “*he humbled himself and became obedient unto death*” (Philippians 2:8).

Today we express our solidarity with Jesus Christ as he begins, in humility; the journey to Jerusalem. The journey will ultimately lead to our salvation, on the cross, on Good Friday.

But Good Friday is not the end of the story; it is a path that leads to newness of life of the resurrected life of Christ – the Easter rebirth.

We end with the good news: “*The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*” – Matthew 13: 44-45

In the Name of the Father, + and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen