

The Triumphant Mission to Love 4/5/2020

Dear brothers and sisters, with today's celebration of the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, the holy Church marks the beginning of Holy Week. And what a way to do it this year without the participation of the members of the community of faith as a result of social distancing to curb the coronavirus pandemic. Let us pray that it may end soon!

Jesus enters Jerusalem resolutely to accomplish his mission as the Shepherd of Israel, even if this will lead to his death. He comes riding on a donkey, a symbol of humility, not on a chariot which represented military power. Jesus knew well the words of the prophet Zechariah: *"Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey..."* Zechariah 9:9.

This way, Jesus enters Jerusalem as the king of the Jews, and people realized this, as they spread their cloaks along the way, as was the custom in the near East when a king passed by. They also waved the olive or palm branches to welcome him as they cried out: "Hosanna" which expresses the need and hope for salvation that the people carried within themselves.

Palm branches symbolized victory, and in this sense, the victory of Christ. So, the entry into Jerusalem is Jesus' victory march. He rides triumphantly into Jerusalem to win an ultimate victory over sin and death with his paschal mystery. This is the paradox we celebrate today: A triumphant victory in Christ's suffering, death and resurrection. Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection show us the depth of God's love. This was his saving mission on earth, one that he obediently accepted and carried out to the end. It is a mission that he invites us to continue on earth; it is the mission to love to the end. Sometimes that mission looks impossible like being a health worker at the frontlines of the coronavirus pandemic or as one seeking peace and justice in the world today.

Our palms are a reminder that we are conquerors in Christ even if for a while we walk in his passion. We are conquerors over evil because we choose good; conquerors over sin because we choose conversion and conquerors over death because we believe in the resurrection. We are conquerors with Christ Jesus who loved us and gave his life for our redemption.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, may our palms today be a sign of hope for the world in crisis. Let us follow Jesus this week in his passion and death so that we may share in his resurrection.

Praised be Jesus Christ.