

Palm Sunday Homily  
April 4-5, 2020

*“The Master has need of them.”*

Readings: Isaiah 50:4-7; Philippians 2:6-11; Matthew 26:14-27:66

In the solemn entry into Jerusalem, our Lord and Savior Jesus entered in humility, according to the prophecy of Zechariah. But suddenly expectations were bound to be disappointed, for the people could not see in the humble entrance a sign of the humility of Him who entered. Expectations were quickly dashed; for what a difference a few days would make. This year, many people have markedly lowered expectations for Holy Week.

In our Opening Gospel, after the two disciples had been instructed to untether the two animals, Jesus warned them: “And if anyone should say anything to you, reply, ‘The master has need of them.’ Then he will send them at once.” The master has need of them. While it is true theologically that God does not need any of us, he desires for you to participate this year, even if it is from your homes. We in the Church need you; we want you to enter into this week, even noting your disappointment with how everything has developed in these past several weeks.

What were the people expecting? They had surely heard of the miracles, of the raising of Lazarus, perhaps even of the Transfiguration. Yet, they were looking for the restoration of Israel, and they must have thought that the messianic kingdom would crush all enemies on earth. Again, here the prophecy of Zechariah seems to go unheeded. It is recalled in the Gospel account of Saint Matthew read at the very beginning of Mass.

We could speak all day about what the people expected, but perhaps a more relevant question today is, “What do we expect?” Do we think anything of significance will happen this Holy Week? Or have we resigned that given the circumstances around, we’ll just sit this one out? I hope that you do not follow that course.

We believe that the sacred events of Holy Week demand of us a response—not a physical sword that crushes our enemies, but a spiritual sword that demands a decision, and a definitive one at that. Let us commit ourselves to walking the entire road to Calvary, not only the portions that cause us the least discomfort. Let us seek to accompany our Savior in complete and lasting fidelity, confident that by his stripes we truly are healed. Through the Cross, and only the Cross, the gates of the kingdom will be opened. May our *Hosannas* be accompanied by a willingness to journey and to suffer with Him, that we might rise with Him in glory.