

**FATHER MARK SCHULTE HOMILY**  
**Palm Sunday (B)**  
**March 28, 2021**  
**“The Palm Leads to the Cross”**

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With this commemoration of Palm Sunday, we enter into Holy Week. Palm Sunday (or Passion Sunday) is a participation in our Lord’s passion. We recall the events surrounding his triumphal entry into Jerusalem; His agony in the garden and subsequent betrayal by Judas, one of His own Apostles; His arrest and abandonment; trial before Pilate and rejection by His own people; and, finally His crucifixion, death, and burial (Mk 11:1-10; 14:1-15; 47).

Holy Thursday recounts the events of the Last Supper, the institution of the Holy Eucharist and the New Testament priesthood.

On Good Friday, Jesus will be lying in the tomb. The faithful will venerate his Holy Cross, the instrument of our salvation.

And then finally on Easter Sunday, we celebrate Our Lord’s glorious resurrection from the tomb, making the freedom from eternal death for all those who believe. I pray that all will be able to participate fully in these days of Holy Week.

Today’s Gospel account tells us how Jesus was led into Jerusalem with great joy and celebration. The people waved their palm branches and laid them on the ground at Jesus’ feet proclaiming: “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” Some of these jubilant people are his disciples, Apostles, friends, and probably even some strangers. They are full of happiness and expectations regarding Jesus. Some of them have probably seen his many miracles and are full of expectations for good things in the future.

However, something very different happens just a short time later. We read how Jesus was eventually betrayed by Judas, one of his own Apostles and arrested. After his arrest, Jesus is quickly abandoned, even by the rest of his Apostles. We saw how Peter, the leader of the twelve Apostles, out of fear will deny Jesus three times. “I tell you I do not know the Man.”

What can we learn from this turn of events?

We have all heard of the term: “Fair-weather friend”!

We have heard of the term: “Boon Companion”.

On the one hand:

A “Boon Companion” is a trusted friend; someone we know will stick with us through thick and thin. We probably know people like this in our own life, even though they can be quite rare.

On the other hand:

A “Fair-weather Friend” is someone very different. This person is someone who is with us as long as times are good. When things get tough, they are nowhere to be seen.

Most of the people who were celebrating Jesus as he entered Jerusalem, waving the palms, were fair weather friends. They were hoping that they would benefit somehow from Jesus’ notoriety. But they were nowhere to be found after Jesus was arrested, convicted and executed.

To be fair, many of them were probably afraid, like Peter and the rest of the Apostles. Jesus understood this and would forgive them for their abandonment.

The true friend of Christ is a person who will walk with Him during His suffering. We recall this when we pray the Stations of the Cross.

The Palm and the Cross are two very different things. The **Palm** represents joy; the **Cross** represents suffering. Many are willing to wave the palm but fewer are willing to carry the cross.

Jesus said, “unless you pick up your cross and follow me you cannot be part of my kingdom”. He made no mention of picking up a palm. Only later, after His resurrection from the dead, the palm branch for the Christian will take on the meaning of victory; Christ’s victory over death.

In Paul’s letter to the Philippians, the second reading, Paul said that Jesus is proclaimed Lord, to which every knee must bend, because he “humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross”, the excruciating death of a criminal (Phil 2:6-11).

And so we ask ourselves, which are we to Jesus: a “Boon Companion”, a trusted faithful friend with Him through thick and thin? Or are we just a “Fair-weather Friend”, someone who hangs around for the good times, but when the going gets tough we’re gone?

We have a few days left in Lent before the Easter Triduum. Let us take this time to recommit ourselves to Jesus and our own crosses – for without the cross there can be no salvation for us. And, as we enter into this Holy Week carrying our palm branches, hailing Jesus as King, let us remain with Him and accompany Him through His passion, uniting our own suffering to His, faithful to our calling as Christians, all the way to the resurrection.

**NOTE:** Remember that your palm is blessed. Display it prominently in your homes behind a crucifix or an image of Jesus.