



Palm Sunday



Date: Sunday, April 13, 2025 | **Season:** Lent | **Year:** C

Gospel Reading during the Procession: Luke 19:28–40

First Reading: Isaiah 50:4–7

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 22:8–9, 17–20, 23–24 | **Response:** Psalm 22:2a

Second Reading: Philippians 2:6–11

Gospel Acclamation: Philippians 2:8–9

Gospel Reading: Luke 22:14–23

Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House in the Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia.

Homily for the Procession:

Behold the King—yet not the king we imagined. Jesus, astride a humble colt, enters Jerusalem not with the grandeur of military victory but with the quiet resolve of divine purpose. The disciples, rejoicing and spreading cloaks on the road, felt the thrill of expectation: finally, the moment had come. Their Messiah was entering the holy city, fulfilling prophecies. Could this be the beginning of the reign they longed for—a kingdom of justice, power, and liberation?

The echoes of Psalm 118 filled the air: *“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!”* Yet, beneath their cheers lay an unspoken question: What kind of King is this? A King who rides not in a chariot but on a borrowed animal? A King who overturns expectations rather than meeting them? Even as the Pharisees demand silence, Jesus’ response reverberates through history: *“If these were silent, the very stones would cry out.”*

This moment of triumph carries the weight of contradiction. The disciples saw in Jesus the hope of liberation, but they did not yet grasp the liberation he offered—a freedom not from Roman oppressors but from the chains of sin and death. His kingdom is not one of domination but one of service, sacrifice, and love.

And so, as we wave our palms today, we too must ask: what kind of King are we welcoming? Are we prepared to follow him, knowing that the path leads not to a throne but to a cross? The feelings among the disciples—joy mingled with confusion and perhaps apprehension—are not so different from our own. We long

for certainty, for a leader who will make all things right. But Jesus calls us to trust in a kingdom that defies our expectations, a kingdom that grows not through force but through the transformative power of love.

Homily for the Passion:

The triumphant cries of “Hosanna” fade into the bitter echoes of betrayal, trial, and crucifixion. Imagine the disciples, gathered at the Last Supper, sensing that something monumental was unfolding yet unable to fully comprehend it. The Master who washed their feet and broke bread with them now speaks of betrayal and sacrifice. Their hearts must have been heavy with confusion and fear. How could the one who calmed storms and healed the sick now speak of suffering and death?

The readings draw us into the heart of this mystery. Isaiah’s Suffering Servant embodies steadfast trust amidst humiliation: *“I have set my face like flint.”* Paul’s hymn in Philippians reveals the paradox of Christ’s kingship: though he was in the form of God, he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant. And in Luke’s Passion narrative, we see Jesus, abandoned and condemned, yet forgiving his executioners and offering hope to a repentant thief.

Consider the rulers of Jesus’ time—Pilate, Herod, the chief priests. Their leadership was marked by fear, manipulation, and a desperate clinging to power. How strikingly different is Jesus, who surrenders power for the sake of love. In our own time, as authoritarianism and division rise, we are reminded that Christ’s kingdom is not of this world. It is a kingdom where greatness is measured by humility, where power is perfected in weakness, and where love triumphs over hate.

What must it have been like for the disciples to witness this? To see their Rabbi, the one they believed was the Messiah, subjected to such humiliation and pain? Their grief and disillusionment mirror our own struggles when our expectations of God are not met. Yet in the silence of Good Friday, a deeper truth will emerge: the cross is not the end. It is the gateway to resurrection, the ultimate sign of a love that conquers even death.

As we enter Holy Week, let us walk with Jesus and his disciples, allowing their questions and emotions to become our own. Let us stand at the foot of the cross and ask: What kind of kingdom are we building in our lives? Are we willing to embrace the way of the cross, trusting that it leads to new life?

And so, let us ask ourselves today:

- How do I respond when God's plans do not align with my expectations?
- In what ways can I build a kingdom of love, justice, and service in my daily life?
- How can I accompany Jesus more closely this Holy Week, embracing both the cross and the hope of resurrection?

Source: <https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2025-04apr-13-yc-hw-ps/>

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.