



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord March 20, 2005

As we have just heard in this Gospel, at the end of his preaching throughout Judea and Galilee the coming of the Kingdom of God, Jesus rode triumphantly into Jerusalem, with great crowds preceding and following him, acclaiming him as the long-expected Messiah, the king of Israel, entering into his royal city. But this triumphant king rode into his city on the back of a beast of burden, to show that he was not a king of worldly might and power, but that meek and humble king of Israel foretold by the prophet. This triumphal entry had a mystical meaning. For it was a symbol of Jesus leaving his earthly life and as it were riding, by way of the Cross, the ultimate manifestation of his humility, into not the earthly but the heavenly Jerusalem, there to be Messiah and King forever, not only of Israel, but of all humankind.

We are about to celebrate the memorial of this triumphal entry, the procession with palms. Like all liturgical memorials, this memorial makes present what it represents. It makes present for us especially the mystical triumphal entry of Jesus, by way of the Cross, into the heavenly Jerusalem. The Mass which follows is in a sense a commentary on this triumphal entry, and in particular on the aspect of it before which our weakened human nature recoils, the aspect, namely, that, if we follow the way of Jesus, then the entrance into eternal glory can only be by way of the supreme degree of humility, the Cross. So in this Mass the entire Passion of the Lord is proclaimed.

The Liturgy of Palm Sunday, then, is an anticipation of the entire Paschal Mystery of the Lord, of his Passion, Death and Resurrection, his supreme saving mystery which we will celebrate in full in the Paschal Triduum at the end of this holiest week of the year. As the liturgical anticipation of the Paschal Mystery, the liturgy of Palm Sunday already makes present for us the saving power of the Paschal Mystery, to begin to give us already the saving fruits of this power, and so to prepare us to celebrate this Mystery in full later in this week. What is it that we are to do to receive these fruits? The answer is given by the great principle of the whole of Christian life: we must share in the sufferings of the Lord, in order to share in his resurrection.

Let us, then, allow to enter into our minds, our hearts, awareness all the sufferings the Lord has asked us to undergo: all our griefs, all our sorrows, all the losses of those whom we love, all our frustrations, all our disappointments, all our failures, all our perplexities, all our helplessness, all our humiliations, and -- the root of it all, yes, we know it is true, the root of it all -- all our sins -- let us, I say, allow all this to enter into our heart's awareness, and then let us all offer it to the Lord Jesus, let us bring it to his Cross, let us place it on his strong shoulders, shoulders strong enough, strong enough indeed, to bear what our shoulders are



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too weak to bear. Then, having died with the Lord, and gone into the grave with him, let us rise up with him, and ascend, and enter in triumph with him, because he calls us and leads us and carries us there, enter in triumph with him into the heavenly Jerusalem, into the foursquare city, the city all of gold and jewels, the city of light which needs no sun or lamp, the city of the One who sits on the Throne and of the Lamb and of the seven-fold Spirit, the city of myriads of angels and of all the just of all times made perfect, where the cry is:

Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest!