

OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA, MUMBLES
Reflection for
Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord, 5 April 2020
(May be used for Home Prayer Service)
Dominican Friars, Swansea

This reflection may be used during the home prayer service. Please see the home prayer service sheet for details.

PROCESSION, PALM, PASSION

Today, we celebrate Passion Sunday or, as it is also called, Palm Sunday. With today's liturgy, we properly begin the Passiontide of our Lord Jesus Christ. Today's celebration also ushers us into the Holy Week. This is a reminder that the Lenten season is almost over, and the Easter celebration is near. Similarly, today's liturgy directs our minds to what we tag as the 3Ps of Palm Sunday: **procession, palm and passion**. These 3Ps, however, take our minds to another great 'P', the Paschal Mystery' of Christ which we shall celebrate during the Triduum.

Procession: Traditionally, Christians gather for a procession to recall Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem to face the last moments of his life. In truth, these last moments of Jesus' life have become the most important moments in the history of human salvation. This is because it was at this time that he reconciled the world with the Father. This liturgical year, the traditional Palm Sunday procession might not be held in many parts of the world because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Notwithstanding, it still holds its significance in our hearts.

We may understand Jesus' journey back to Jerusalem as his journey back to God. Likewise, this procession reminds us of our own journey back to God from whom we came. Indeed, life itself is a pilgrimage. In the Old Testament, pilgrimage was very common among the Jews. At different periods of the year, the Jews would go up to Jerusalem for their annual feasts and this informed the composition of Psalm 122. Every day of our lives is pilgrimage back to God who created us.

Palm: The title, Palm Sunday, received its name from the action of the people who cut palms and spread them on the road for Jesus to pass (cf. Mt 21:8). It was traditional for Jews to carry palms at the Feast of Tabernacles which was being celebrated at the time of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem (cf. Lev 23:40). The Book of Revelation (7:9) also speaks of the saints who stood before the Lamb with palms in their hands. Palms then become symbols of victory

and peace. Thus, the use of palms at Jesus' feet indicates that he was entering Jerusalem in peace not with war.

More so, horses are usually ridden to war. Jesus rather rode on a donkey to show that he came in peace and to give us peace. The use of palm and the donkey both fulfil the Messianic name given to Jesus by Isaiah, the Prince of Peace (cf. Is 9:6). He has established peace on earth by the shedding of his own blood not by the shedding of others' blood as people do at war (cf. Heb 9:12). In addition, as the people joyfully laid their clothes and palm branches on the road for Jesus, we also joyfully present our lives to him in the Eucharist in thanksgiving for all his gifts and blessings.

Passion: No doubt, the mission of Jesus in Jerusalem at that period of the year was for his Passion. This passion is dramatically narrated in the passion narrative of today. The Son of God stood trial before humans. He refused to defend himself. There was a conspiracy to have him crucified. A criminal was even released in his stead. Soldiers mocked him. They made him carry his own cross. At last, they crucified him to the wood of the Cross. At the appointed time, he gave up his Spirit. He died for the sake of us all. He did all this for love of the world. By his passion, he has indeed established peace in our world and reconciled us with the Father.

What does he ask of us today? He asks that we also carry our crosses and follow him (cf. Mt 16:24) to 'Golgotha' where we shall learn to surrender everything to the will of the Father. He asks that we join him in his passion and unite our pains, sorrows, limitations, setbacks with his Passion. By his Passion, Jesus came to truly feel the bodily pain which many of us endure for many years from ill health. Whatever pain we go through as humans, Jesus understands. He truly does. Whatever brings pain to our hearts is our passion. Amid our earthly passion, we believe that the Prince of Peace holds us by the hand in divine procession and leads us to the Paschal feast in heaven.