



# WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



## PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION, CYCLE A

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*"Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."  
" Matt 21:5*

As we enter Holy Week, Palm Sunday becomes the annual reckoning of our Pilgrims Way of the Cross. For the Christian Neophyte, it is the point of departure, as he or she waits at the city gate for Jesus to enter. The Neophyte is here because of the stories told, witnesses observed, and the burning desire in the heart for a new spiritual adventure. For the Christian Pilgrim, we are arriving after traveling full circle, having witnessed the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, followed him into the desert, climbed the mountain of the transfiguration with him, descended on our journey to Jacob's Well, been witness to his restoring the eyesight of the blind man, and observing the most life-altering occasion of raising his friend, Lazarus from the dead. And now, here we are at the city gate as Jesus processes along the palm-strewn streets. As the events this Holy Week unfolds before us, we are given a keepsake palm branch, and the neophyte trembles as the Pilgrims catch their breath.

Quickly, though, things turn ugly for Jesus and his followers. The Neophytes and Pilgrims alike are tempted to drop away, to perhaps return another year after gathering a renewed courage, and having received the gift of fortitude from the Holy Spirit that quickens their trembling hearts.

Saint Paul exhorts us every Ash Wednesday to be Ambassadors for Christ. The Neophyte is amazed that these gathering Pilgrims would dare to have a cross of ashes sealed on their foreheads and wear the ashes boldly into the marketplace, where they suffer the threat of being taunted, bullied, belittled, and disgraced. The neophyte watches for them to flee into the safe haven of their sanctuary. But they stand tall. Paul wrote to Corinth: *"For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong"* (2 Corinthians 12:10). The Neophyte experiences a glimmer of understanding that there exists an ideal that someone is strongest in their lowest moments. These Pilgrims are just passing through, strangers in a strange land.

On Palm Sunday the Pilgrims and Neophytes can use their keepsake palm branch as a blessed sacramental to remind them of their Pilgrimage every day until the next year's *Fat Tuesday* when their community gathers the palms, and burns them to ashes to remind them of scripture, *"Remember, man, that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shall return."* Genesis 3:19. Or is there more than just dust? We have an opportunity every year to shed the mortal trappings, seeing through our spiritual eyes that have been opened with the blind man at the *Pool of Siloam*, where we are sent on our Pilgrim's Way. Every day forward from Palm Sunday we can contemplate the *Imago Dei – Image of God* within; the divinization given to us at our baptism as we encounter daily the Risen Christ, taking on not a dry, brittle heart, but the Sacred Heart of Jesus and His mercy, where He etches His signature on our eternal heart.

We are given the gift of the Church and the Eucharist to help us journey from Palm Sunday to Ash Wednesday. It is ours freely for the taking, but up to each of us as we confront life and death. From Ash Wednesday, as Ambassadors for Christ, we choose life as we journey under the protection of the shadow of Eagle's Wings.

This week, reflect on your journey set before you. May your year not turn brittle like the palm branch that you observe daily. Each passing day, it turns a bit drier, a bit more brittle, but not you, for you bathe in the renewing waters of the River of Life. Lifting your heart, a heart on fire, you journey ever onward toward the New Jerusalem.

*"I have set my eyes on your hills, Jerusalem, my destiny!"*

**A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew**

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them,

*'Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me.*

*If anyone says anything to you, just say this,*

*"The Lord needs them."*

*And he will send them immediately.'*

This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

*'Tell the daughter of Zion,*

*Look, your king is coming to you,*

*humble, and mounted on a donkey,*

*and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'*

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them;

they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them.

A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road,

and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

*'Hosanna to the Son of David!*

*Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!*

*Hosanna in the highest heaven!'*

When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?'

The crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'

***The Gospel of the Lord***